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LETTERS

ON THE

English and French Nations :

CONTAINING

Curious and useful Observations on their
Constitutions natural and political ;

Nervous and humorous Descriptions of the Virtues,
Vices, Ridicules and Foibles of the Inhabitants :

Critical Remarks on their Writers ;

Together with Moral Reflections interspersed
throughout the Work.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

J. B.
By Mons. L'ABBE' LE BLANC.

Quid verum atque decens curo & rogo, & omnis in hoc sum.
Horat. l. i. ep. i.

V O L. II.

Translated from the Original French.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. BRINDLEY in New-Bondstreet ; R. FRANKLIN
in Russel-street, Covent-Garden ; C. DAVIS in Holbourn ; and
J. HODGES, London-Bridge. MDCCXLVII.





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L E T T E R



LETTERS

ON THE

English and French Nations.

LETTER L.

To the Chevalier B * *.

A whimsical description of a fox-hunter. That men are nearly the same every-where.

DONCASTER, &c.

S I R,

T IS my continuance in the country, where we know nothing, has made me so long delay answering your letter of the fifth of December last. And now you are arriv'd at Paris, at the opera, the balls, and all the diversions that great city abounds with ; and where you make part of a society of amiable people, very different from certain country gentlemen,

Vol. II. B that

that I have spent some days with. However, I shall hardly go for London, before the latter end of this month; as the queen's death has occasion'd the shutting up of the play-houses, the chief resource a foreigner has, in a city like the capital of England. I wait, for the beginning of the mourning's being over, and the parliament's assembling, before I go.

As I have no news to tell you, and am not one of those who amuse themselves with inventing it; the subject of my letter, shall be an article in one of the last public papers, which I have just read. 'Tis a whimsical description, of a very odd being, which the English call a *Fox-hunter*; the author himself will immediately acquaint you, what sort of an animal it is.

“ The fox-hunter, says he, is an animal,
 “ very frequently met with in Great-Britain,
 “ and particularly in the Northern counties;
 “ we must own it resembles a man very
 “ much, at least externally; and has even
 “ the use of speech, though it commonly
 “ hallooes more than it speaks: but it acts,
 “ perceives, and thinks quite differently from
 “ us, if it really does think, which I will not
 “ assure you it does. I have examin'd it very
 “ narrowly, and find 'tis at the bottom, not
 “ so mischievous as savage: and I have even
 “ found some of them tame. I could almost
 “ think it a middling species, between a man
 “ and a beast; because it speaks like the first,
 “ and

“ and lives like the latter; and tho’ it is or-
 “ ganiz’d in such a manner, that it can in-
 “ deed pronounce the same sounds that we
 “ do, yet ’tis totally void of understanding,
 “ judgment, and reason, which are certainly
 “ the most essential parts of man.

“ The fox-hunter, is an animal; or a man,
 “ if it can be honour’d with that name, be-
 “ cause it has some human qualities; the fox-
 “ hunter, I say, is a man who lives continu-
 “ ally among dogs and horses; we name him
 “ so, because of his great antipathy to the
 “ fox; which is as natural to him, as to the
 “ dogs themselves; for which reason he com-
 “ bines with them to destroy it. He hates
 “ cities, particularly capitals; a fox-hunter of
 “ the true breed, has never set foot in Lon-
 “ don. He is on horse-back at six o’clock in
 “ the morning, even in winter; neither snow,
 “ nor bad weather prevents it. He never
 “ stays under a roof, unless it be to eat or
 “ sleep.

“ What makes it imagin’d fox-hunters are
 “ not men, is; that in the midst of a civili-
 “ zed nation, renown’d for sciences, they are
 “ intirely ignorant what education, learning,
 “ and politeness are. As soon as ever they
 “ have learn’d to read, write and ride, they
 “ think themselves accomplish’d gentlemen;
 “ and the most knowing of them, hardly e-
 “ ver read any thing besides the news-papers.
 “ And yet, with this great fund of learning,
 “ they pique themselves on understanding po-
 litics,

“ litics, and judge very severely on whatever
“ is done in parliament. No bill appears
“ there, however wise, but they oppose it in
“ the strongest manner, if they don't like it.
“ They are in the country, what the mob
“ are in cities; always ready to arm for the
“ public good, whenever their own particular
“ advantage is in question. They are ene-
“ mies to all ministers whatever; and to the
“ French, as much in peace, as in war.
“ Though commerce makes our nation flou-
“ rish, and formidable to all its neighbours;
“ and though they partake of the advantages
“ accruing from it; they are always com-
“ plaining of the encouragement given it:
“ and if they were masters, would set fire to
“ all the shipping in Great-Britain. This is
“ what they are in general. Their whole
“ conversation turns upon hunting, and these
“ two great words, *Liberty* and *Property*,
“ which perhaps most of them repeat, with-
“ out knowing the meaning of them. Beyond
“ this, they can't speak four words; and
“ must be mute in all conversation, about
“ knowing how to behave one's-self, sweet-
“ nefs of temper, affability, complaisance,
“ humanity, and the other social virtues.

“ The fox-hunter knows no glory, except
“ that of running as fast as the animal, whose
“ declar'd enemy he is; no pleasure but
“ hunting, no virtue but hard-drinking. He
“ spends that part of the day in which he is
“ not on horse-back, at table, in smoaking
“ and

“ and getting drunk; and 'tis certainly the
 “ only way, in which he is capable of being
 “ serviceable to the state. By his great con-
 “ sumption of beer, he at least contributes
 “ something, towards defraying the expence
 “ of it.

“ He is naturally a very dull animal; per-
 “ haps his food is the cause of it. He eats
 “ nothing but salt-beef, cold mutton, cab-
 “ bage, carrots and pudding; which last is
 “ his favourite dish; and that which is hea-
 “ viest, he likes best. His drink is ale, course
 “ Portugal wines, and now and then a little
 “ of the strongest brandy. He drinks two
 “ favourite healths at his meals, which is per-
 “ haps, the only rule he observes; the first,
 “ to all honest fox-hunters in Great-Britain,
 “ protestants or catholicks, without excepti-
 “ on; the title of hunter reconciles them all:
 “ the second bumper is, confusion to the mi-
 “ nister.

“ Tho' fox-hunters are absolutely void of
 “ understanding; yet you'll find some of
 “ them, who set up for wits. You may
 “ judge of them, by this witty expression.
 “ One of them, that I am not much ac-
 “ quainted with, answer'd his sister, who in-
 “ vited him to London, to hear FARINELLI;
 “ *Sister, I wou'dn't give a farthing to hear*
 “ *your FARINELLI, and your whole Italian*
 “ *opera; I have here twenty voices, with which*
 “ *I joyn in chorus *, and make them sing; one*

B 3

“ while

* 'Tis the custom of the English to halloo, to animate the dogs. They make very little use of hunting-horns.

“ while in the woods, and another in the plains;

“ and ’tis the only musick I am fond of.

“ I should never have done, were I to describe all the singularities of a fox-hunter ;
 “ but what I have said, is sufficient to give
 “ you an idea of him.”

When any folly strikes me, I am pleas’d to find an author who sets it off to advantage ; and even, though he does not do it well, I am pleas’d with his intention. I must own however, ’twas not necessary to go out of France, to find subjects to laugh at. For what would an Englishman say, to the pride, clownishness and ignorance of our nobility in the country ! Would not he find some of our gentry, as odd a sort of beings as a fox-hunter ? How many French differ in no respect from the fox-hunter, except that their passion is for hunting the hare ? The gentlemen glass-makers you have seen this vacation, though they lead a quite different sort of life ; yet, are they not to be compar’d in many things to the fox-hunter, and particularly in knowledge ? The more one examines mankind, the more one finds they are very near the same, every where. The light of sciences, enlightens only a very few ; all the rest, in what country soever, are destin’d to live in the night of ignorance.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.

L E T-



LETTER LI.

To the President BOUHIER.

*Remarks on mr. ROWE's Tamerlane; and some
French theatrical authors.*

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

DOCTOR BENTLEY is one of the English, who is most worthy of the honour you have done him, to enter the lists with him, in point of criticism. Most of those who have labour'd in commenting on old authors, and restoring the text; have applied themselves so much to the niceties of language, that they have taken no notice of the expression of nature: they have, as I may say, minded nothing but the bark of them; without perceiving the beauties it incloses, which constitute their principal merit.

You have by a particular privilege reunited talents, which almost mutually exclude each other. I have discover'd the spirit of VIRGIL, in your translation of the fourth book of his *ÆNEIS*; that is to say, in that piece of antiquity, where the passion of love is painted in the truest and most lively manner.

The tragedy of *Tamerlane*, which an English gentleman extoll'd so much to you, deserves only part of the praise he gave it. The

author, indeed, in the person of that celebrated conqueror of Asia, gives you a perfect model of true heroism; but the character of Bajazet, who is opposed to him; is not treated with address enough: he would represent him to us a prince, proud and revengeful, without faith or humanity, who knew no law but his own caprice, and no religion but his interest: but he has made him only a madman, who does not always act according to these principles; and who makes himself as contemptible for his folly, as odious for his cruelty. Perhaps mr. ROWE has only adopted the prejudices of many of our historians, with regard to this Ottoman emperor; prejudices, that are entirely contradicted by the oriental writers. Or perhaps, he had not invention enough, to give the persons he introduces on the stage, more dignity and similitude of truth. These contrasts of virtues and vices, are the rock, on which the imagination of tragick writers most commonly splits. If they succeed in drawing the characters of heroes; 'tis only by opposing monsters to them, who have nothing of the human species in them: if they make the former triumph, 'tis by making tyrants, who are generally thought great politicians, fall into the most obvious snares.

On the contrary, 'tis on these occasions, CORNEILLE's force and extent of genius appear in their greatest lustre; and 'tis particularly by his manner of overcoming these difficulties,

ficulties, that he has acquired the name of GREAT. The more intricate his plots are, the more happy resources he finds to unravel them.

In *Rodogune*, he opposes two young princes, whose virtue neither the most tender love, the hopes of a throne, or the fear of death, can move; to an ambitious and unnatural mother, who sacrifices every thing to her immoderate desire of reigning. How artfully does he conclude this tragedy, the object of admiration, of all judges of theatrical performances; when *Cleopatra* finds herself under the necessity of drinking first of the poison'd cup, she had prepar'd for her rival! He does not only heighten the virtue, he gives you for a model, by contrary extremes; but also by characters of an inferior one. *Seleucus* is virtuous, without being as great as *Antiochus*.

Phocas, wicked as he is, is not deaf to the voice of nature; but she only accosts him, for his Punishment: on the throne, to which his crimes had raised him; he seeks in vain for a son, who will not own him.

*O wretched Phocas! * O too happy Maurice!*
After you to die, you two lost sons regain;
And I, not one can find, after me to reign!

What is most remarkable in *Tamerlane*, is the *second* scene of the *third* act; *mr. ROWE* has borrow'd the subject, from the history of those unhappy times, when fanaticism veil'd
under

* In *Heraclius*.

under the holy cloak of religion, hurry'd our ancestors in the rage of civil wars, and set an example of the most wicked attempts on both sides.

A Dervise, gain'd by Bajazet, demands a private audience of Tamerlane; he announces to him the vengeance of heaven, for having dipp'd his hands in the blood of true-believers; and threatens him with the curse of the prophet, if he does not set Bajazet at liberty. Tamerlane, by this last proposal, perceiving the Dervise to be an emissary of the Turkish emperor; unmasks his hypocrisy, and easily confounds him.

TAMERLANE.

----- Hence; I have found thee.

DERVISE.

I have but one resort. Now aid me, prophet.
(*aside.*)

Yet have I somewhat further to unfold;
Our prophet speaks to thee in thunder. -----

* thus -----

TAMERLANE.

No, villain, heav'n is watchful o'er its worshippers,
And blasts the murderer's purpose. Think
thou wretch, (*wresting the dagger*
(*from him.*)

Think on the pains that wait thy crime, and
tremble

When I shall doom thee ----- DER-

* (*Here the Dervise draws a conceal'd dagger, and offers to stab Tamerlane.*)

DERVISE.

'Tis but death at last,
And I will suffer greatly for the cause
That urg'd me first to the bold deed.

TAMERLANE.

Oh, impious!
Enthusiasm thus makes villains, martyrs.
(*Pausing*) It shall be so ---- To die! 'twere a
reward----

Now learn the difference 'twixt thy faith and
mine;

Thine bids thee lift thy dagger to my throat,
Mine can forgive the wrong, and bid thee live.
Keep thy own wicked secret, and be safe:

If thou continu'st still to be the same,
'Tis punishment enough to be a villain:
If thou repent'st, I have gain'd one to virtue,
And am, in that, rewarded for my mercy.
Hence! from my sight!--It shocks my soul,
to think

That there is such a monster in my kind.

(*exit Dervise.*)

Whither will man's impiety extend?

Oh gracious heav'n! do'st thou with-hold
thy thunder,

When bold assassins take thy name upon 'em,
And swear, they are the champions of thy
cause?

This scene is handled very artfully, and writ
with a great deal of fire; I have confin'd my-
self to the giving you only an extract out of

it,

it, because I must have sent the whole first act, to enable you to judge of all the particular beauties 'tis full of.

Tamerlane, as the author judiciously observes, inflicts a sort of punishment on the wicked Dervise ; by leaving him to the remorse of his conscience, or the regret of not having been able to perpetrate his villainy. Thus GUSTAVUS, in mr. PIRON's tragedy, leaves Christiern a life, which could only be a torment to him. But when clemency is bestow'd on persons who deserve it, and for whose preservation the poet has made us anxious ; it causes the strongest and most agreeable emotions in us. Such is Augustus's pardon in Cinna ; and such mr. CREBILLON's fine scene in Pyrrhus ; where the heroick generosity of that prince, disarms the tyrant, into whose hands he delivers himself. We must acknowledge it for the honour of humanity, that these are the most affecting passages in a tragedy. The universal applauses they always meet with, are a certain proof ; that there is nothing so amiable as virtue, even to wicked men. We see it triumph with pleasure ; and feel a secret satisfaction, in being sensible of it. We look upon ourselves, as it were, complaisantly ; because we find ourselves at that time, virtuous. In the transports which these heroick actions cause, we even think ourselves capable of the same. We are pleas'd with the author, who gives us so high an idea of human nature, and of ourselves. I suspect this is the reason, why
so

so many people prefer CORNEILLE to RACINE. The same self-love that governs all our actions, dictates also all our opinions: and perhaps, the author, we most esteem; is he that gives us the greatest reason to esteem ourselves.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LII.

To Monsieur DE BUFFONS;

More observations on the defects in the English and French gardens. Observations on those of St. Maur and Montbard; and on taste in gardening.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

THE diversions of the city, to which I have been return'd some time, have not effect enough on me, to make me forget those of the country. Independent of your taste for gardening, the subject itself is so various and agreeable; that I am not afraid of tiring you, by enlarging on what regards either its agreeableness or utility. I have not yet communicated to you, all the defects I find, in the English, as well as the French gardens. Many
English

English endeavour to give theirs, what they call in their own language, a romantic air; that is to say, almost *Picturesque*; but fail in it, for want of taste. The places, where they propose to imitate the venerable ruins of antiquity, present your eyes with nothing but the pitiful remains of a ruinous house; objects, which in great, are noble and majestic; when represented in miniature, become childish and ridiculous. What I have heard term'd an obelisk in some gardens, has often appear'd to me, only a nine-pin. In other places, I have seen such an humble imitation of a triumphal arch, that one can't help taking it for the garden-door, plac'd out of whim within-side.

A nobleman of this kingdom has expended immense sums to imbellish the gardens of one of his country houses, about ten miles from London; but although he is a man of taste, and understands architecture extremely well, by having been too lavish of the riches of this art, he has made them more surprizing, perhaps, than agreeable; in the space of a few acres, he has built several little temples upon the models of those of ancient Rome. One or two had produc'd the enchantment he proposed; the too great number destroys their effect. 'Tis dangerous in all sorts of things, to heap ornaments on one another; because while we endeavour to excite admiration, we only surprize.

How much more agreeably was I struck one day at St. Maur, a house built by FRAN-

CIS I, the restorer of taste and learning in France; whose situation is as charming, as the gardens are pleasant. I was walking in a distant and rural place, when at the farther end of a shady alley, I perceiv'd a pavilion; which, by the venerable aspect time has given it, and the inscription that adorns its frontispiece, resembles indeed the temple of the deities, to which it is consecrated. 'Tis dedicated *Quietis & Musis*; and indeed, every priest of the Muses, to use the words of HORACE, finds himself in that place, inspir'd by their presence: and the mortal, who is not happy enough to know their mysteries, is at least tempted to sacrifice to repose.

In general, wherever amiable nature appears in all her simplicity, she inspires people of taste, with a nobler sort of pleasure, if I may be allowed to express myself so; and with a more agreeable and charming sensation, than the master-pieces of art themselves. There is a majesty in nature, that art can't arrive at. Shall one ever see any thing upon the stage here, where they crowd in heaps to admire the richness and the splendor of the *Palace of the Sun*, that comes up to the magnificent sight, a fine day-break offers us; and which men who have eyes, have never once deign'd to view? The rude and ill-shaped rocks, the venerable trees in the forest of Fontainebleau, present our sight with a more majestick and grander aspect, than the laboured neatness of the best kept gardens.

gardens. MILTON had never painted it so nobly or so pleasantly, if he had not well considered it; his understanding had no difficulty to describe the sensations which had warm'd his imagination. One cant read his *Paradise Lost*, without perceiving, that he had a hundred times in his life, taken pleasure in seeing the sun, sometimes gild the horizon, and reanimate all nature; and at others, withdraw its rays, and leave her buried in the horrors of darkness. There are some men, who imagine themselves painters, because they can copy pictures; and others, who imagine themselves poets, because they can translate VIRGIL, into English or French verse; but if they have not the talent, to paint nature from herself; they are really neither painters nor poets. Men of genius, only imitate the great masters of those two sciences, in their noble and simple manner of expressing her. Those who take attitudes from RAPHAEL, or descriptions from VIRGIL; are, properly speaking, only copiers. MILTON, does not only describe the coolness of the morning, and the beautiful enamel of a meadow, or the verdure of a hill; he expresses even the sentiments of joy and pleasure these objects excite in our soul: and gives us the satisfaction of thinking, that as we feel the same sensations he does, we have the happiness to see nature with the same eyes.

How much superior would the beauty of a garden, adorn'd with a true taste, and where
all

all art was wholly conceal'd, be to the trifling and childish ornaments, I have mentioned ; where the walks gravelled for convenience, should only appear so, to set off the verdure ; where one should see throughout the whole a symmetry, without uniformity, and a variety without confusion ; where lovely FLORA should deck herself with her jewels, and not lessen their value by being too lavish of them. A crown of jessamin and roses, a garland of myrtle and pinks, give more beauty to her charms, than those heaps of flowers, she is commonly rather over loaden with, than adorn'd. Invite, if possible, a nymph from the neighbourhood, into the midst of your garden, to pay the tribute of her waters to the goddess of flowers. At the farther end of it, let PAN have an altar of green turf, under the shade of elms and limes. Let your copses be shady, and thick enough to intercept the western breezes. Charming PHILOMEL will come thither, and warble her harmonious strains. Avoid the appearance of too much art throughout the whole, it grows tiresome in the end ; a negligent and rural air, has charms that will always please. Make a prudent use, according to your situation, of openings, to have a prospect of adjacent objects ; and if you would have your copses form a more agreeable point of view for your house, imitate nature, and plant trees of different greens and different shapes. Thus in a landskip by

CLAUDE LORRAIN, a pine is plac'd by an oak, and they mutually set off each other.

Instead of observing an exact level in a large garden, I should rather chuse to see copses, whose trees almost all of different species, and rising one above another on a little hill; presented to my eyes a sort of verdant amphitheatre. Here I would plant an arbour of shrubs, with odoriferous flowers; there I would have an assembly of ever-greens, to form a perpetual spring. In other respects, I would have no regard to the placing, but to the variety of my flowers; and I should be pleas'd to see a copse, crown'd with the enamel of a pleasant meadow.

But why do I speak to you, sir, who have made your house at Montbard, a truly enchanted fairy castle! You have renewed the wonders of SEMIRAMIS's gardens; for who would not be surpris'd to see towers an hundred feet high, crown'd with cypresses? You have done more; you have sowed or planted all the most beautiful vegetables in nature. I see nothing here amongst the most curious English, that you have not. With how fine a taste are your gardens laid out? you have taken all possible advantage, both of the situation, and variety of every part of them. What agreeableness, what variety, what richness in all your copses! To give our French a taste for plantations, and let them see how much variety of trees, embellishes gardens; I could only wish that Montbard, was within four leagues

leagues of Paris: they would soon be weary of that tiresome uniformity, that runs throughout almost all their gardens.

'Tis but too true, that very few people are born with taste, and that 'tis not acquir'd with riches; which only inspire us with pride, and ill-judged expences. 'Tis much easier to crowd a garden with marble statues, good or bad, by dint of money; than to give them a beautiful form. Most architects, on whom they rely in this respect, can only trace outlines; whatever falls under the cognizance of reason, is above their capacity. There are few besides those who are born with a certain genius, or have long studied the rules of art, whose perfection is the imitation of nature; that are friends to simplicity. Low geniuses are pleased with searching after those trifles, whose only merit is their difficulty or oddness.

People who spend their whole time in gaming or in counting-houses; never once think that an oak is a finer tree than a yew, or that a hillock adorn'd with rocks and verdure, is a finer prospect, than an avenue of trees, which one can't see the end of. They would think they disgrac'd their gardens, if they planted an ash in them; because it is a forest-tree, and yet, is there a finer tree, I don't say for shade, but to diversify a copse? why have they banish'd the Acacia into inn-yards, whose wood is so useful, and whose flowers are no less agreeable to the eye, than their odour to the

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nose;

nose; and what at least, by the verdure of its leaves, which are always green, is so agreeable to the sight? Whence comes it that we find no myrtles but in the gardens of country parsons? We are losers in many respects, by forsaking the taste of our ancestors.

They already begin to leave their excessive prejudice, in favour of wild-chestnut-trees. How could they be so infatuated with a tree, which indeed yields a fine shade; but makes you repay with interest, the advantage of first putting forth its leaves, by shedding them so early: with so nasty a tree, and whose wood is entirely useless? Is not the chestnut-tree, which France abounded so much in formerly, preferable to this foreign one? 'Tis not so nasty, yields almost as good a shade, produces a very useful fruit; and as to the wood, 'tis good for many uses. It is capable of being improved by a skilful gardener, who knew how to take care of it. Those who would plant avenues of them at their country houses, would at least assure their posterity of timber enough to rebuild them. I have seen magnificent avenues of them at Greenwich, where their fruit cant ripen. In the neighbourhood of Paris, where it would ripen very well, you find none, except in the woods. Do they even know in our provinces, what the plane-tree is, which yields so fine a shade, and grows with so little care? There are fifty other sorts of trees very common in this country, which are absolutely unknown in France; unless

els to you, and some few of the curious. I know an Englishman, a man of taste, settled at Paris, who has sent for several sorts of trees from his own country, and particularly evergreens; most of the French who see them, complain he has planted nothing but yews in his garden, though there is not one there. In the king's garden, the Parisians confound them with pines, firs, cypresses, and several other sorts of trees, that never shed their leaves. It is not requir'd of them, to know the names of fourteen thousand plants, that are known to botanists; but I am surpris'd, that in this enlightened age, our people should be so ignorant of the nature of forreign trees, that might enrich their own country. Is it not being too ignorant of things, that are often useful; and are at least capable of pleasing the eye? God having created this vast universe, examined every thing, and found it was good; and I think the man, who has so little curiosity to know all the riches and variety of his blessings, is unworthy of them.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LIH.

TO Mr. CREBILLON,

Of the French Academy.

Concerning the superiority of the English in satire to the French ; of the liberty of the press, party-libels, and their authors.

GRANTHAM, &c.

SIR,

WHEN the muses crown'd your long and great success on the stage, by opening their sanctuary to you ; I remember the public, who had long desired to see you a member of the Academy, charm'd to hear the father of ELECTRA and RHADAMISTUS speak the only language in it, that was worthy of him, *, evidenc'd their approbation, by the flattering applauses they are accustomed to give you at the play-house : I remember how sensibly they were affected to hear you say, *I never dipp'd my pen in gall* ; a thought, that does as much honour to your heart, as to your understanding. How happy is the man, that can with justice, say this of himself ? There are

* Mr. CREBILLON return'd his thanks in verse.

are but few of the greatest men that can. Most men of talents, giving way to a mean jealousy, have dishonoured themselves, by the use they have made of them.

If criticism is useful both for learning and manners, satire is often dangerous in both respects; the first alone preserves taste in productions of the understanding, the other only discourages talents, and nourishes the malignity of mens hearts. Tho' sound judgment is common among the English; there are but few of them who have taste enough, to enable them to excel in criticism. In this respect we have better models than they, and several of their authors, have only translated ours. They are only superior to us in satire, because they take the liberty to say every thing; and have indeed, great opportunities of succeeding in this sort of writing. The party spirit with which they are educated, their melancholly disposition, and the violence of their passions, all incline them to satire. What makes us laugh, angers them; and perhaps both equally blameable, we sing the most dismal events, they rail at the most indifferent things. What gall, what bitterness flows from the earl of DORSET's pen! my lord ROCHESTER is still more violent, and has as little regard to modesty. There is nothing so dangerous to the corrupt morals they have both attack'd, as the very works in which they have censured them. Their excessively lewd satyres, are become the manual of libertines.

What they call in England the *liberty of the press*, is that which most writers take, of attacking the characters and morals of persons of the highest rank. Those political papers and pamphlets, the *crafts-man* * and *common sense*; are so many satires against the government, and libels against particular persons. They are dictated more by hatred to those in place, than love of the publick welfare.

In 1730, my lord H---Y and mr. P---Y reciprocally treated each other in this sort of pamphlets, in so indecent a manner, and so unbecoming persons of their rank; that they were obliged to leave the pen, and draw their swords. My lord H---Y sent mr. P---Y a challenge; they fought in the upper St. JAMES'S PARK, where the first received two or three wounds, and the other only a slight one in the left hand. *'Tis a melancholly reflection for us, says an English author, to be forc'd to own, that our publick papers are full of nothing but personality and scandalous satires.* The disorder and licentiousness of the SATURNALIA, lasted only three days at Rome; but one would imagine, there was not a day in the year, on which this Pagan festival was not celebrated in England.

They are not contented in most of these writings, to rail at the minister only, and wound the respect due to royal majesty; they

* This is the most violent of all the journals, that have appeared against the court; and what is most talked of. It might be justly termed the *alarm-bell of sedition*.

expose even the authority of the parliament, to the contempt of the people. Party-writers are almost always hot and violent, and the English know no medium in any thing. The satires which are published here against the ministry, are penn'd in as unpolite as violent a style. There is nothing but menaces, infamy and the gallows. Whoever is in place, is a *Sejanus*, a *Wolfey*, or a *Buckingham*; and if they speak of the parliament, 'tis often in the most scandalous terms. That in the time of CHARLES II, was called the parliament of *pensioners*; this now, is called the parliament of *place men*.

It would be difficult perhaps to bridle this licentiousness, but 'tis certain they will not restrain it. The legislative power dare not arm its hand to punish it; the publick takes the authors whose malice amuses them; under their protection, and the honestest people condemn the fault, without being willing to suffer it to be chastised. If they arrest the culpable, the general cry of the nation is; *the liberty of the press is in danger*; which the English look on as the bulwark of all their other liberties. They think the right they have to speak their sentiments of the government, the first and most essential of their privileges; and in this respect think like the Greeks, who fell into the same excesses. They pretend that publick envy, is necessary for the welfare of the state; and that this sort of Ostracism, curbs the ambitious views of the great. 'Tis a barrier

rier they oppose to enterprising ministers; but you find some of them here as well as elsewhere, who break through it, and let them talk, provided they let them act.

It must also be own'd, that let ministers be what they will, they are equally exposed to the rashness of party writers; and 'tis in vain to disguise the source of the evil; in countries where the ministers are openly envied, 'tis certain the envy aims secretly at the sovereign.

Let the members of the two houses, declaim violently against the new taxes they would impose, and which would be burthensome to the nation, 'tis their duty; and the more courageous their zeal, the more commendable. Let an English writer, who has nothing but his country's interest in view, discover the artifices of an ill designing minister; he still does nothing but what is the duty of a vigilant citizen. He has a right to have a watchful eye on the conduct of those, who govern the state. He may attack him boldly, when he fights him with nothing but the weapons of truth; and will have the glory of being the champion of the common cause of liberty. But for people with passion instead of zeal, and malice instead of merit, veiling their private interest under the specious pretence of the publick, to make use of anonymous writings to render the sovereign odious to his subjects, and inspire them with a spirit of sedition and rebellion; is a pernicious and intolerable abuse, in all states. 'Tis turning a weapon to the de-

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struction of government, that should never be made use of but for its defence. “ By the
“ liberty of the press, we ought not to un-
“ derstand, a power of vilifying our gover-
“ nours and lawful magistrates with impunity;
“ and of diminishing or destroying by scanda-
“ lous writings, the respect and reverence
“ which is due to authority, and the persons
“ in whose hands it is deposited. We ought
“ not to make the press an instrument to ruin
“ the reputation of our neighbours, or do
“ them the least prejudice; either by insulting
“ over their misfortunes, their defects and per-
“ sonal frailties, or by exposing the secrets of
“ their families to be publicly laugh’d at, &c.
Thus the author of the *Crafts-man* expresses himself, and yet in every paper, takes the liberty he owns is punishable; and if he sometimes has recourse to allegory, ’tis only to make his satires more biting. When he substitutes the word ROBIN, instead of ROBERT, and when he calls the ministry against which he writes, ROBINOCRACY; what else does he aim at, but to render both the minister and the sovereign, whose authority he exercises, contemptible? When the public gives all these sorts of satires a favourable reception, ’tis a bad sign. When libels and licentious discourses against those who govern a state, are well received; ’tis an omen of troubles that threaten it.

It seldom happens that those, who conceal themselves, have good intentions. As zeal
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for the publick welfare, is not afraid to appear what it is; so party spirit, always uses art to disguise itself. Like hypocrisy, 'tis always busy in hiding the vices it has, and adorning itself with virtues, it has not. Iniquity seeks darkness, and cowards fight treacherously. There are indeed men, who thinking of nothing but to raise themselves on the ruins of their country; deserve to be exposed to the publick censure, and made as infamous in their reputation, as they are culpable in their conduct, and deprav'd in their morals. As virtue itself, is often its only reward; it were to be wished, that vice also always found its own punishment, in the just infamy that ought to attend it. In this case, the author of a libel, is only the vile instrument of publick vengeance; and there is no difference between him, and the person who executes on a criminal, the sentence justice has pronounc'd against him; except that he undertakes the office without permission, and without owning it. But 'tis an unhappy thing, for the most innocent and upright life to be exposed to slanderous libels, and the consequence of them, popular injustice.

The wisest governments, have been so sensible of the necessity of restraining the licentiousness of satyrical minds, that the first Roman laws, those of the twelve tables, had made them liable to punishment; before AUGUSTUS subjected them to the law DE MA-

JESTATE. * The same prudence dictated the famous edict in France, which condemns them to be lashed. The *Scandalum magnatum*, in England, is but a useless restraint to this licentiousness; 'tis in vain to subject it to punishments, that can be so easily eluded: laws against defamation, are a jest to those, who can violate them with impunity.

LIBELS, says, an English author, *are of such dangerous consequence, that in all civilized states they have enacted laws to punish them; it were to be wished those laws were executed with rigour; but the misfortune is, we cannot determine the nature and different species of libels.* In England, they have nothing to say to the author of the most defamatory satires, provided he does not name the person he abuses; as to the rest, he may paint him in the most distinguishing colours, and even give the first and last letter of his name, for fear they should mistake him. You find booksellers as impudent as the author, who undertake the printing of these scandalous satires; and dare the authority of parliament, by advertising at the head of the work, that they are published by the permission of that august assembly. * *The judge and jury are the only people in England, who ought not to understand the author's meaning,*

* *Primus Augustus cognitionem de famosis libellis specie legis ejus tractavit, commotus Cassii Severi libidine, qui viros fœminasque illustres procacibus scriptis tractaverat.* Corn. Tacit.

* 'Tis the custom of most anonymous authors now a days to turn acts of parliament into ridicule.

ing, whenever he is to be prosecuted. However absurd this proposition may be, the celebrated author of CATO's letters, is not afraid to defend it; and very probably, because he thought himself interested in it. Setting out on this maxim, 'tis certain, nothing can be treated as a libel.

The perverseness of the mind of man has found a way, to make printing an invention sometimes as prejudicial to society, as 'tis advantageous to it in other respects. It infects a whole kingdom by libels. They are so many stains made easily that nothing can take out. Most people believe evil with eagerness; and few have reason or honesty enough, to be easily undeceiv'd. I think it needless to enlarge on the inconveniences that result to this country, from all these political libels. 'Tis too easily perceiv'd that they are the spring from whence the hatred of party, popular emotions, and all those disorders flow, which disturb the harmony of government, and the execution of the laws.

This negligence, or this timidity of the parliament, in restraining such a licentiousness; is the cause that the different ranks of people in the state, are expos'd to all the invenom'd shafts, the low and interested motives of shameless, and sometimes perverse authors, can dictate. They look on the impunity of the vice, as a privilege. They print, and sell here publicly, the most scandalous and unjust libels against particular persons.

In a well civilized state, the honour of the subject, ought to be as much under the protection of the laws, as their fortune. The more easily it is blemished, the more attentive they should be to punish those, who commit this sort of theft. A man, who is abused by satyrs, is not allowed to take revenge on the offender; and indeed with good reason: because such an act would be an infringement on the sovereign power, in which alone the right of punishment is invested. But the magistrates, who are intrusted with the administration of justice, and have a legal power to punish revenge, if taken by the offended person, as a crime; ought to think themselves in duty bound to punish the offender. If good behaviour is sometimes a reason for relaxing the severity of the laws; those disturbers of the public tranquillity should at least be separated from the community, as people out of their senses are, in order to prevent their doing mischief. And such they really are: for it is literally true that none but senseless people are mischievous.

In all sorts of governments, princes and ministers, who neglect to restrain the audaciousness of these licentious people, are punished themselves for their carelessness. They take the same liberties with them, they do with particular persons. They daily see satires published which may displease them, for having treated those with indifference, they ought

ought to have punished. The benefit resulting from the example, is an ample recompence for the troublesome clamour one is forc'd to raise, by punishing the authors of these pernicious works. The ill-name, Sixtus Quintus acquired at Rome, by putting to death with the utmost severity, those villains that deserv'd it; was a trifle, in comparifon of the good effects, such a spectacle must produce on the minds of men : few of whom addict themselves to crimes, but from the latter hopes of escaping with impunity.

The ill-nature of fatyrical authors, wants a bridle to restrain it, and prevent its communicating itself to others ; by being left at liberty, it becomes a contagious disease ; and of all others, most easily infects youth. Is it surprising that so many people give themselves to fatyre ? 'Tis the only species of writing, in which good sense is not necessary, to make it succeed. All those scandalous pamphlets, which at this time infect learning in France, owe their whole success to the ill-nature of the readers.

Keeping us within the bounds of reason and good manners, is not restraining our liberty, but forcing us to make a good use of it. Those who complain they have not liberty enough to do ill, are unworthy of the benefits of society. It were to be wished, for the general good, that no particular person were permitted to be wicked with impunity. In vain do we offer rewards for virtue, if we don't punish

nish vice with a strict hand. Most men are frail, and only governed by fear; none but noble souls are sensible of honour, and they need no other rules to direct them. That is the best civilized state, which has the most ways of forcing the inhabitants to be virtuous.

The English government is not so perfect in this respect, as in others. TURPIN a villain who committed so many robberies on the highway, for four years together, and who at last suffered on the gallows the punishment due to his crimes; did at least one service to the society, by giving a wholesome piece of advice, for the civil government of this city. In the speech he made, according to custom, at the place of execution, which was also printed as usual; he declar'd the only way to exterminate highwaymen in England, was to hang those who began by picking pockets, at London, of watches and snuff-boxes.

The author of an answer to mr. D * * *'s, satyrical letters, which has been lately published, makes a very odd use of this declaration. *I shall not be concern'd*, says he, *to compare people, whose profession and morals are very much alike. Those who treacherously attack the honour and reputation of the whole world, want nothing perhaps but as much courage as assassins, to be as wicked as they are. If they would put a stop to the licentiousness of the authors of libels, they must punish that of satyrical writers with severity. The class of the lat-*

ter, is certainly the nursery of the others. The venom, their criticisms are full of, is the same poison that infects most of our libels. The dose, in these, is stronger, and more artfully prepared, but 'tis still of the same species. 'Tis not surprising that they invenom the shaft more, when they conceal themselves to shoot it; when they take advantage of the obscurity, in which they pen these works of iniquity, to diffuse in them all the gall that can flow from the malice of a shallow brain, and blackness of a corrupt heart.

I know, says he elsewhere, that some of our authors would complain of a severity, that should prohibit them the licentious use of satire. There are some who sincerely own, that without the malice with which they season their criticisms, they would not be worth reading. Do they think to palliate their infamous practise, by saying they have no other way to live? TURPIN, whose speech I have just related to you, had the same excuse for his crimes. His profession was robbing, and he had no other. These writers are to consider whether he ought to be pardoned. Deprav'd as they are, it will be difficult for them, not to pronounce themselves guilty.*

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.

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* *Satyre unmask'd*; or an answer to the calumnies of m. D—, by Hildebrand Jacob, Esq; London, by W. Lewis, in Ruffel-street.



L E T T E R L I V .

To Mr. L. A. H * * * .

Of the loss the French manufactures sustain'd by the expulsion of the Protestants; the art of brewing wines in England; the act for prohibiting the importation of French wines in bottles; and some abuses in the civil government.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

YOU will do a very great service to the state, if you can succeed in the project you have form'd, of sending for an English calender to Paris; 'tis certain the tabbies made here, are the most beautiful in Europe. I should say you undertook a very difficult thing, if I did not know, that nothing was so to you. Our neighbours are jealous of their manufactures, because they know their importance. In this respect, why have we not been always as wise as they! As to you, sir, you worthily answer the great views of the minister, to whom the king has intrusted the care of arts.*

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* The Controller-general and superintendent of buildings.

They had need of such a protector to make them revive ; and he knows all the advantages may be reap'd from your talents. Your good friends the English, on their part, will not be much obliged to you, for the trick you play them, they will reproach themselves with the not having been able to conceal any thing from you : however, they would be in the wrong to complain, because you only follow their example, and retake from them a small part of what they owe us.

We have felt very severely the loss we sustain'd, when the French protestants, who were forced to leave their country, weakened our commerce, by carrying all our manufactures which were a considerable branch of it, into other countries, and in which they were the more employed, as they could not, by the laws of the kingdom, bear any office in the state. The English have enrich'd themselves at our expence ; they have learn'd of us to make hats, silk-stockings, paper, and various sorts of stuffs, which we at present take from them. We formerly sent them swords, knives, cizars, &c. and now they have the best artificers in Europe, in all sorts of works made of steel. You are usefully employed in repairing our losses.

I don't know whether the English have learned another sort of manufacture from us, which is very profitable to those who apply themselves

selves to it, and in which they certainly surpass us very much: 'tis the manufacture of wines. The whole skill of our vintners at Paris, is confin'd to metamorphosing Orleans wine into Burgundy, and multiplying Champagne; they know nothing more. *They go, says one of our comick writers, and bring the one from beyond Estampes, and send for the other from Surene.* The wine-merchants in this country are much more dexterous; they compose several sorts of liquor, which they sell for wine; and which they know how to extract from all other sorts of fruit, except grapes. They are the principal chymists in England. In a word, they counterfeit our wines at London, as they do our stuffs; or rather, they make wines of all the countries in the world.

A member of the house of commons undertook to demonstrate to them, that there was not imported into England, a twentieth part of the wine, which was sold for wine of the growth of *Bordeaux*. A snuff-merchant was prosecuted one day, upon an accusation of mixing other materials with tobacco; but he prov'd there was not a leaf of tobacco in all the snuff that he sold, and here, where you know they elude the laws by such subterfuges, he gain'd his cause.

'Tis the same with regard to many sorts of wine, that are sold at London. That which they call Champagne, is often nothing but a mixture of cyder, perry, sugar, and some o-

ther ingredients. For those who do not mind the taste of the liquor, so much as its effects; they compose another sort, of our French brandies, or of rum and malt-spirits. The art of making wine here, is quite different from that of the countries in which it grows; they sometimes even brew it as they do beer. There are in several English books, various receipts for making liquors without grapes, that resemble wine, and produce the same effects. However it be, we reckon our vintners among the rank of merchants; those at London, are placed in the rank of artificers; and 'tis one of those trades, which it costs the most to put an apprentice to, not because of its difficulty, but on account of the fortunes they make by it.

You must have heard, when here, those who love Champagne; complain they can drink none that is neat, since the act of parliament, that prohibits the importation of any French wines into England, in bottles. The intent of that act, was to favour a glass-house, which had been lately established near London; but has only encourag'd the roguery of the wine merchants. It has made the fortune of some particular persons, without being any sensible advantage to the nation. The price of the bottle, was a trifle compared to that of the liquor; and they have since found, the damage the English could sustain from it, was nothing in comparison of the advantage of drinking unmix'd, and consequently more healthful wines. The

undertakers of the glass-house were suspected to have bought the votes of some leading members in the house of commons. 'Tis the same in all bodies; if you can but gain the heads, you are sure of all the rest. Perhaps those, who have the care of the most important affairs of the state here, neglect too much the minute particulars of the civil government of the kingdom.

A man who has credit in the parliament, can easily obtain an act to mend the highways in a county; that is to say, a permission to impose a tax on all passengers, and leave the roads pretty much in the same condition he found them. How many times have not you, as well as I, pay'd for leave to pass through roads almost impracticable? If such things happen'd in countries, where the prince determines all things, and yet can't see all things; one would not be so much surpris'd: but many people in France will hardly be able to conceive, that those to whom the people intrust their rights, are brib'd here; as the mistress, or secretary of an intendant, is in other countries. However, what is the result of all this; but that men are every where, very nearly the same. The English, though not so much devoted to the court, as the French, are at least as attentive to their private interests. It requires resolution to prefer the welfare of our country, to our own; and the

greater part of mankind are not wicked, but frail.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LV.

To Monsieur DE LA CHAUSSEE;

Of the English and French play-houses.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

ALL the letters I have receiv'd from Paris for these three months past, agree with your's in respect to Mademoiselle DU MESNIL, in whose praise you are so copious to me: those who have mentioned her to me, hope as well as you, to see in her one day, another LE COUVREUR. The new Hermione is an acquisition, so much the more valuable to our theatre, as she is quite of a different character from the actress CHARMANTE, who shares the public applause with her. Each of them excels in her own character. From what you observe to me of her, I see in Mademoiselle DU MESNIL's acting, all the fire of CORNEILLE's compositions; as I find in Mademoiselle GAUSSIN's, all the graces that form the particular

ular character of RACINE. Thus, our MELPOMENE finds in both of them, something to console herself for her losses ; but who will repair those our THALIA has sustain'd, by the death of mademoiselle QUINAULT ?

As to what concerns the theatres in this country, there are, fir, several companies of comedians at London ; and yet perhaps not one tolerable one. CIBBER, who had so great a reputation, has left the stage ; the part he excell'd in, was that of the French Petit-maitre ; and he made two journies to Paris, on purpose to study their airs, and assume their character, at tables in public houses of entertainment. We must excuse his error in his patterns, he could not see others ; and if he did not imitate them so well, as the English imagin'd he did, I am not surpris'd : for he ingenuously acknowledg'd to me, he did not know enough of our language to hold a conversation. But as he succeeded in expressing extravagant foppery, 'twas enough to perswade the London tradesmen, who take every body with a foppish air, for a Frenchman, that he copied our countrymen exceedingly well.

The company that has the greatest reputation, has also lately lost the famous tragedian, who owed his inimitable manner of expressing rage, to the ill-humour and passion, he abandoned himself to in his family. In short, the play-houses at London, have nobody now, that wears either the slipper or buskin with dignity.

The

The English, who love theatrical performances, and understand them; own there has always been a remarkable difference, between their comedians and ours. They have had excellent ones, but all those of the second rank, have been always miserably bad; the necessary consequence of the few graces diffused among the English. Besides, they do not seem capable of being moderate in any thing. On the contrary, in our companies of comedians, besides those of the first rank; there are several others who by a just and discreet action, are capable of giving pleasure. The same audience that has admired BARON, has more than once applauded BEAUBOURG. A Frenchman, by the gracefulness of his person, and carriage alone, very often comes off with honour; and an Englishman, with the most essential qualifications, sometimes finds great difficulty in succeeding.

You find at this time more pitiful buffoons on the stage at London, than tolerable actors; which seems to me the effects of the national taste. The English, if you'll permit me to use a term of painting, which can alone express my idea; love *Caricaturas*: they are more struck with a large face and great nose, designed by CALLOT; than with a noble and graceful countenance, trac'd by CORRIGIO's pencil. For this reason, their comic characters are always more overstrain'd than ours; and the actor in following his own taste, imagines he only follows the genius of the author.

thor. The more he finds of the Caricatura in his part, the more he thinks there ought to be of it, in his action ; and thus, he endeavours to express the humour of it, more by the grimaces of his face, than the proper modulation of his voice : and he succeeds the better in it, as 'tis the less difficult to do. When farces supply'd the place of comedies, grimace supply'd the place of action. As it is easier to widen the mouth, or lengthen the nose, than to represent the features in their exact proportion, so it requires less ability to over-act a character, than to make ones self master of nature, and express it perfectly. The most ordinary painters very often draw portraits, in which you find a resemblance ; but 'tis only by exaggerating the features that distinguish them. Painters of ability in their profession, the RIGAUDS, LARGILIERES, and LA TOURS, overdo nothing ; and either describe nature as she is, or find means to give her grace, as much as others disfigure her.

As to the rest, of all the buffoons that are here, I know none comparable to those of a new company of comedians, who began to act last week in the Hay-market, in the same place where there was formerly a French comedy. They make you laugh even at their bills. You could not guess by whose order they are establish'd here ; 'tis by order of king THEODORE, whose servants they at first said they were : but the next day they changed masters ; and in their bills, put themselves
under

under the protection of THAMAS KOULICAN. And to morrow, perhaps they'll say, they are the comedians of the king of CONGO. They run so much here, after any thing that is odd; that without changing the play, they need only alter their bills, to draw all the people in London to their house.

This is one of those trifles that shews the character of singularity, which the English boast of, and which they always succeed by. One of them, with regard to the whimsical bills of these new comedians, said to me with an air of vanity and inward satisfaction; is it not true, sir, that comedians in France, would not dare to take the same titles? You are slaves in every thing; acknowledge there is no country but England, where people are free.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.

L E T-



LETTER LVI.

To Abbé GEDOVIN,

Member of the French Academy, and that of Inscriptions
and Belles-Lettres.

Remarks on the tragedy of OROONOKO.

LONDON, &c.

S I R,

A Man can't be more flattered than I am, with the friendship you are pleas'd to express to me ; but 'tis easier to be sensible of the value of the confidence you repose in me, than to deserve it. The dissertation you sent me, is full of an uncommon learning, and you have found a way to make it as amusing in the particulars, as 'tis instructing in the main.

Your love to the muses, is only gratitude ; you have taken, by conversing with the Greek ones, that polite taste which is conspicuous in all you write. This is a gift they bestow on none but their favourites ; they suffer but few of the learned to approach the sanctuary of the graces ; the door of it has been always shut, against those of this country. The English authors of all sorts, are always void of
taste;

taste ; and tragedy, which is a species of writing that requires the greatest dignity, often falls into such a lowness and meaness here, as is a scandal to the stage. With this defect indeed, you find in the plays of good authors, a strong concern, that results from the truth with which nature is painted in them. 'Tis what the English tragick writers excell in ; and if there was as much choice as truth in their paintings, 'twould be difficult to dispute pre-cedency with them. Oroonoko is one of those remarkable plays for true and pathetic pictures, which produce so great an effect : yet this tragedy would not be indur'd on our theatre, because of the low comedy that is intermix'd with it. To give you an idea of the truth and concern in it, i'll send you two scenes, which I believe, will please you.

Scene at Surinam, a colony in the West-Indies, which formerly belong'd to the English.

PERSONS.

The governour's lieutenant.

A Spanish captain.

Blandford,

Stan-more ;

Lucy,

Welldon,

Oroonoko.

Aboan, &c.

} Two Englishmen of the colony.

*} Two sisters, who came to Surinam to
get husbands.*

A C T

A C T I.

SCENE I. *Black slaves, men, women, and children, pass across the stage by two and two; ABOAN and others of OROONOKO's attendants by two and two; OROONOKO last of all in chains.*

Lucy.

Are all these wretches slaves?

Stanmore.

All sold, they and their posterity, all slaves.

Lucy.

O miserable fortune!

Blandford.

Most of them know no better! they were born so, and only change their masters. But a prince born only to command, betray'd and sold! My heart drops blood for him.

Captain.

Now, governour, here he comes, pray observe him.

Oroonoko.

So, sir, you have kept your word with me.

Captain.

I am a better christian, I thank you, than to keep it with a heathen.

Oroonoko.

You are a christian, be a christian still:
If you have any god that teaches you,

To

To break your word, I need not curse you
more :

Let him cheat you, as you are false to me.

You faithful followers of my better fortune,

We have been fellow-soldiers in the field ;

[embracing his friends.]

Now we are fellow-slaves. This last farewell.

Be sure of one thing that will comfort us,

Whatever world we next are thrown upon

Cannot be worse than this.

[All slaves go off but Oroonoko.]

Captain.

You see what a bloody pagan he is, governor ; but I took care that none of his followers should be in the same lot with him, for fear they should undertake some desperate action, to the danger of the colony.

Oroonoko.

Live still in fear ; it is the villain's curse,

And will revenge my chains : fear even me,

Who have no power to hurt thee. Nature
abhors,

And drives thee out from the society

And commerce of mankind, for breach of
faith.

Men live and prosper but in mutual trust ;

A confidence of one another's truth :

That thou hast violated. I have done,

I know my fortune, and submit to it.

Governour.

Sir, I am sorry for your fortune, and would
help it, if I could.

Bland-

Blandford.

Take off his chains. You know your condition; you are fallen into honourable hands: you are the lord governor's slave, who will use you nobly: in his absence, it shall be my care to serve you.

[*Blandford applying to him.*
Oroonoko.

I hear you, but I can believe no more.

Governour.

Captain, I'm afraid the world won't speak so honourably of this action of your's, as you would have 'em.

Captain.

I have the money. Let the world speak and be damn'd, I care not.

Oroonoko.

[*To Blandford.*

I would forget myself. Be satisfy'd,
I am above the rank of common slaves,
Let that content you. The christian there,
that knows me,
For his own sake will not discover more.

Captain.

I have other matters to mind. You have him, and much good may do you with your prince.

[*Exit.*

The planters pulling and staring at Oroonoko.

Blandford.

What would you have there? You stare as if you never saw a man before. Stand farther off.

[*Turns 'em away.*

Oroonoko.

Let 'em stare on,
I am unfortunate, but not asham'd,
Of being so. No, let the guilty blush,
The white man that betray'd me: honest
black

Disdains to change its colour. I am ready:
Where must I go? Dispose as you please.
I am not well acquainted with my fortune,
But must learn to know it better: so I know,
you say,

Degrees make all things easy.

Blandford.

All things shall be easy.

Oroonoko.

Tear off this pomp, and let me know myself:
The slavish habit best becomes me now.
Hard fare, and whips, and chains may over-
pow'r

The frailer flesh, and bow my body down:
But there's another, nobler part of me,
Out of your reach, which you can never tame.

Blandford.

You shall find nothing of this wretchedness
You apprehend. We are not monsters all.
You seem unwilling to disclose yourself;
Therefore for fear the mentioning your name,
Shou'd give you new disquiets, I presume
To call you Cæsar.

Oroonoko.

I am myself; but call me what you please.

Stanmore.

A very good name, Cæsar.

Governor.

Governor.

And very fit for his character.

Oroonoko.

Was Cæsar then a slave?

Governor.

I think he was; to pirates too: he was a great conqueror, but unfortunate in his friends.-----

Oroonoko.

His friends were christians?

Blandford.

No.

Oroonoko.

No! that's strange.

Governor.

And murder'd by them.

Oroonoko.

I would be Cæsar then. Yet I will live.

Blandford.

Live to be happier.

Oroonoko.

Do what you will with me.

Blandford.

I'll wait upon you, attend, and serve you.

[*Exit with Oroonoko.*]

Lucy.

Well, if the captain had brought this prince's country along with him, and would make me queen of it, I would not have him, after doing so base a thing.

Welldon.

He's a man to thrive in the world, sister; he'll make you the better jointure.

E 2

Lucy.

Lucy.

Hang him, nothing can prosper with him.

Stanmore.

Enquire into the great estates, and you will find most of 'em depend upon the same title of honesty : the men who raise 'em first, are much of the captain's principles.

Welldon.

Ay, ay, as you say, let him be damn'd for the good of his family. Come, sister, we are invited to dinner.

Governor.

Stanmore, you dine with me.

A C T II.

SCENE II. *Enter Oroonoko and Blandford.*

Oroonoko.

You grant I have good reason to suspect
All the professions you can make to me.

Blandford.

Indeed you have.

Oroonoko.

The dog that sold me did profess as much
As you can do---but yet, I know not why---
Whether it is because I'm fallen so low,
And have no more to fear-----that is not it ;
I am a slave no longer than I please.
'Tis something nobler---being just myself,

I am inclining to think others so :
'Tis that prevails upon me to believe you.

Blandford.

You may believe me.

Oroonoko.

I do believe you.

From what I know of you, you are no fool ;
Fools only are the knaves, and live by tricks :
Wise men may thrive without 'em, and be
honest.

Blandford.

They won't all take your counsel--- [*aside.*

Oroonoko.

You know my story, and you say you are
A friend to my misfortunes ; that's a name
Will teach you what you owe yourself and
me.

Blandford.

I'll study to deserve to be you friend.
When once our noble governor arrives,
With him you will not need my interest :
He is too generous not to feel your wrongs.
But be assur'd I will employ my pow'r,
And find the means to send you home again.

Oroonoko.

I thank you, fir,-----my honest, wretched
friends,

Their chains are heavy : they have hardly
found [*sighing*

So kind a master. May I ask you, fir,
What is become of them ? Perhaps I should
not.

Y u will forgive a stranger.

E 3

Bland-

Blandford.

I'll enquire,
And use my best endeavours, where they are,
To have 'em gently us'd.

Oroonoko.

You offer every cordial that can keep
My hopes alive, to wait a better day.
What friendly care can do, you have apply'd;
But oh ! I have a grief admits no cure.

Blandford.

You do not know, fir-----

Oroonoko.

Can you raise the dead ?
Pursue and overtake the wings of time ?
And bring about again the hours, the days,
The years that made me happy ?

Blandford.

That is not to be done.

Oroonoko.

No, there is nothing to be done for me.

[Kneeling and kissing the earth.]

Thou god ador'd ! Thou ever-glorious sun !
If she be yet on earth, send me a beam
Of thy all-seeing power to light me to her.
Or if thy sister goddess has preferr'd
Her beauty to the skies to be a star ;
O tell me where she shines, that I may stand
Whole nights, and gaze upon her !

Blandford.

I am rude, and interrupt you.

Oroonoko.

I am troublesome :

But

But pray give me your pardon. My swoll'n
heart

Bursts out its passage, and I must complain.
O! Can you think of nothing dearer to me?
Dearer than liberty, my country, friends,
Much dearer than my life? that I have lost
The tend'rest, best belov'd, and loving wife.
Blandford.

Alas! I pity you.

Oroonoko.

Do pity me:

Pity's a-kin to love; and every thought
Of that soft kind, is welcome to my soul.
I would be pityed here.

Blandford.

I dare not ask

More than you please to tell me: but if you
Think it convenient to let me know
Your story, I dare promise you to bear
A part in your distress, if not assist you.

Oroonoko.

The honest-hearted man! I wanted such,
Just such a friend as thou art, that would sit
Still as the night, and let me talk whole days
Of my Imoinda. O! I'll tell thee all
From first to last, and pray observe me well.

Blandford.

I will most heedfully.

Oroonoko.

There was a stranger in my father's court,
Valu'd and honour'd much: he was a white,
The first I ever saw of your complexion:

He chang'd his gods for ours, and so grew
great;

Of many virtues, and so fam'd in arms,
He still commanded all my father's wars.

I was bred under him. One fatal day,
The armies joining, he before me stept,
Receiving in his breast a poison'd dart
Levell'd at me; he dy'd within my arms.
I've tir'd you already.

Blandford.

Pray go on.

Oroonoko.

He left an only daughter, whom he brought
An infant to Angola. When I came
Back to the court, a happy conqueror;
Humanity oblig'd me to condole
With this sad virgin for a father's loss,
Lost for my safety. I presented her
With all the slaves of battle to atone
Her father's ghost. But when I saw her face,
And heard her speak, I offer'd up myself
To be the sacrifice. She bow'd and blush'd;
I wonder'd and ador'd. The sacred pow'r
That had subdu'd me, then inspir'd my
tongue,

Inclin'd her heart; and all our talk was love.

Blandford.

Then you were happy.

Oroonoko.

O! I was too happy,

I marry'd her; and though my countries cu-
stom

Indulg'd the privilege of many wives,

I swore myself never to know but her.
She grew with child, and I grew happier still.
O my Imoinda ! But it could not last.
Her fatal beauty reach'd my father's ears ;
He sent for her to court, where, cursed court !
No woman comes, but for his amorous use.
He raging to possess her, she was forc'd
To own herself my wife. The furious king
Started at incest ; but grown desperate,
Not daring to enjoy, what he desir'd,
In mad revenge, which I could never learn,
He poison'd her, or sent her far, far off,
Far from my hopes ever to see her more.

Blandford.

Most barbarous of fathers ! the sad tale
Has struck me dumb with wonder,

Oroonoko.

I have done.

I'll trouble you no farther ; now and then,
A sigh will have its way ; that shall be all.

Enter Stanmore.

Stanmore.

Blandford, the lieutenant governor is gone
to your plantation. He desires you would bring
the royal slave with you. The sight of his
fair mistress, he says, is an entertainment for a
prince ; he would have his opinion of her.

Oroonoko.

Is he a lover ?

Blandford.

So he says himself ; he flatters a beautiful
slave that I have, and calls her mistress. O -

Oroonoko.

Must he then flatter her to call her mistress?
I pity the proud man, who thinks himself
Above being in love; what, though she be a
 slave,
She may deserve him.

Blandford.

You shall judge of that, when you see her, sir.

Oroonoko.

I go with you.

[*Exeunt.*]

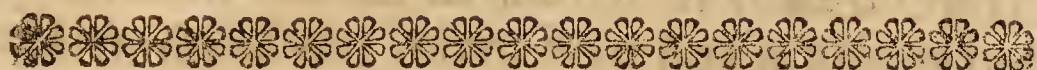
I am not less solicitous to hear what effects these two scenes will have upon you, than the lieutenant governor is to know what Oroonoko's opinion will be of the beautiful slave, who you very much suspect is Imoinda herself.

The noble part, that Blandford acts here, of friend and protector of the distressed, is equally kept up and active throughout the whole play. The author has painted the first of all virtues, in it, with the strongest and most moving strokes; and let us say it to the honour of the English, that which is the peculiar characteristic of their nation, humanity. What pity it is, such fine patterns of virtue, should often have the most scandalous portraits of vice oppos'd to 'em, on their theatre; and that plays, in which you find the wisest maxims, and most instructing examples, should notwithstanding be dangerous to morality, by the lewd scenes which are intermix'd with them.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.

LET-



LETTER LVII.

To Monsieur DE BUFFONS;

Of agriculture and plantations; the nursery at Montbard; and the religion of the Guebres.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

Agriculture is a slow, but sure way of enriching ones self; the earth rewards those who cultivate her, with her produce. The English, in this respect, more sensible than we are, look upon this as the principal means of augmenting their estates: and many rich people among them apply themselves to country business, and acquire great wealth by it. They follow the example of the ancient patriarchs, and like them increase the inheritance they leave their children. I know a gentleman in the county of Derby, who has acquir'd a large estate by this laudable occupation. He was not contented to have his lands only better cultivated than his neighbours, but search'd into the bowels of them, and found a great treasure there; he found a coal-pit, which brings him a greater annual income,

come, than his numerous flocks and herds, and plentiful crops of grain. We buy of the English the coal we use in our forges, but might find some in our own provinces, if we would take the trouble to look for it. How many men would enlarge their fortunes, if they follow'd the wise example the English set us?

You, sir, out of a taste for whatever can be useful to mankind, do what others do only out of private interest; thus at Montbard, where the architects of that tower, which has defy'd the injury of time for so many ages, saw nothing but stones, you have found a quarry of marble; which will enrich the inhabitants of that town, and save those of Dijon a great deal of money, who were oblig'd to purchase it at a great distance.

I am pleas'd to hear your nursery of Montbard, is designed for the use of the people, who look'd on it only as an object of curiosity. The states of Burgundy when they bought it, did very wisely, to leave you the direction of it. Thus without any other interest, than the pleasure you take in this part of agriculture, you will continue to gratify your passion for plantations; and the labourer who has not time, or does not understand the art of cultivating young plants, will receive them, by order of those who are elected, from the gardeners, ready to produce fruit. This establishment was dictated by a policy equally wise and beneficial. The allurements it offers to
par-

particular persons, who have only their private interest in view, conduce to that of the whole society, which they have no regard to. What a secret satisfaction will you one day have, to see the whole province planted with trees of your own sowing! In this you imitate the great CYRUS, who planted all *Asia-minor* with fruit-trees.

Your taste and that of the English for plantations, recalls to my mind the manners of that people, who formerly made it the principal part of their religious discipline. I mean the Guebres or Peris, because they are the same nation under different names, some of which are still remaining in the mountains of Persia. Of all the religions, invented by those who have mistaken error for truth, perhaps there was none more rational than theirs; they adored the sun, and those who were so unfortunate as not to know the true God, seem more excusable, in taking that for the supreme being, which giving light, seem'd to give life to every thing, and consequently to be the father and benefactor of all nature. As to their morals, if they were not conformable in every thing to the rigid precepts of philosophy; they were at least conformable to the soundest policy. According to their principles, giving life to new beings, whether by augmenting the number of their fellow-citizens, or planting trees; were the most acceptable actions to that existence, which was the soul of the universe. Those who profess'd to lead the most
religi-

religious lives, spent their time in clearing the ground, and repairing the highways. Judge, sir, how useful such religious institutions must be to a state. Sometimes, a society of devout men undertook to change a piece of barren ground into a fruitful garden; at others, whole towns shew'd their piety, by planting new forests. By the effects of this religious zeal, I see the hills cover'd with vines, the fields yielding plentiful harvests, the highways bordered with fruit-trees, and milk and honey flowing, as one may say, in the meadows. The state grew rich in proportion as the country was beautify'd, the farmer liv'd in plenty, commerce flourish'd, and the nation grew every day more powerful; see what advantages, entirely human indeed, were the consequence of these religious principles! Persia was then the garden of the East; and if the fruits of that vast country are so famous, if it has the glory of being the original nursery of all those which are most esteem'd in Europe; * perhaps, 'tis as much owing to the culture of those wise idolaters, as to the favourable quality of its climate. Mahometanism, which has exterminated this humane and beneficent nation with the sword; is on the contrary one of the most destructive religions to society. The Turks have laid waste the provinces they have conquered; the Seraglios of those infidels, the pala-

* *Malum persicum*, a peach. *Malum armeniacum*, an apricock, &c.

palaces of their pleasures ; are the tombs of mankind. Besides, I ask you if fertilizing lands and enriching a country, are not better things in themselves, than all the ablutions of the Mussulmen.

Doubt not, sir, but that labouring for the advantage of his creatures, by multiplying the riches, the earth only adorns itself with, to present to us ; is an agreeable work to the creator. God did not build palaces for our first parents ; he plac'd them in a delightful garden ; and though, as a punishment for their disobedience, he condemned their descendants to eat their bread, by the sweat of their brow ; he mitigated as a father, the sentence he pronounc'd as a judge. Man plants, but God waters. He that has sow'd with pain, often reaps with joy. The earth pays man the wages of his labour, and the price of his industry.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.

L E T-



LETTER LVIII.

To the President BOUHIER;

On the reformation in England; its influence on morality, and the dangerous abuse of the liberty of the press.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

Whatever encomiums the English make on CRANMER, and the other doctors who introduc'd the reformation into England; they were in the opinions of reasonable men, nothing but downright enthusiasts: and if they had not been seconded by those, who were animated by a greedy desire of seizing on the possessions of the Monks, or by a spirit of irreligion; they would never have compass'd their designs. 'Twas not the desire of a reformation, that produc'd this great change in the nation; but it was the desire of a change, that establish'd the reformation in it.

These new doctors had not entirely seduc'd the people, before the nobility gave the sanction of the laws to a doctrine that enrich'd them with the spoils of the church. Temporal
ral

ral interest bewitches the eyes of most people, and does not permit them to distinguish their true spiritual one. This is what made the English peers joyfully embrace the religion of their sovereign. However, the pretended reformation, in the last age, had like to have been totally extirpated. If JAMES II. had been better advis'd, if he had try'd mild ways, instead of hazarding violent ones: in short, if he had had as much prudence as zeal, perhaps England would at this time have been catholic.

I shall not here examine the reasons that induc'd the English to embrace the reformation; I am too well convinc'd they mistook darkness for light, and quitted the road of truth, to walk in the ways of error. I don't pretend profanely to encroach on the authority of the church, and leave our divines to dispute that with them; but morality falls under the cognizance of every reasonable being: let us then examine what change this so much boasted reformation has produc'd in that respect. Are the morals of the clergy and people truly more pure in England, than they were in former times; or than they are now in France?

Whoever thinks the English clergy more reform'd than ours, is deceived. The ecclesiastics here pretend, that the continual reproaches made them, proceed only from their being hated; and that they are hated, only because they do their duty. But I should be glad to ask their bishops, whether it is their duty to sacrifice every thing to their ambition;

and the clergy of the second rank, whether the drunkenness in which many of them live, has nothing in itself blameable, and dishonourable to ecclesiastics? 'Tis indiscreet to complain of the contempt we draw on ourselves; and can we think it strange, the people should not have a due respect for an office; which its professors themselves, have no respect for?

The English are scandaliz'd to see cardinals at an opera in Italy; or to find some Abbés at the representation of POLYEUCTES, or ATHALIA, the *Misanthrope*, or the *learned women*, at Paris; I cannot deny but that those of the clergy, who are present at these worldly diversions, deviate in this from the discipline of the church. But what can one think of the English clergy, when one sees the coffee-houses at London, and all sorts of publick-houses, full of ecclesiastics! such is the effect of prejudice, a clergyman who would not go to an Italian opera, which at the bottom is only a consort of musick; is not afraid to spend the whole day in smoaking and drinking, in places where they talk in the most dissolute manner: and where the vice that degrades him, sets a bad example to sober people, and makes him the jest of libertines.

The marriage of priests, is the only remarkable change the reformation has produc'd among the English clergy, I shall not take the decisions of the catholick church, which the English will not acknowledge, for
my

my rule ; but those of sound policy, which they ought to submit to ; and experience, which rarely deceives us in the things of this world : the marriage of priests diminishes the respect we should have for them. The misconduct of a woman in this country, often makes a clergyman fall into a contempt that reflects on his character. The lewdness of a bishop's daughter, makes him the object of the most indecent jests.

'Tis remark'd here, that part of the young women, which misfortunes plunge into an irregular course of life, are clergymen's daughters. The reason of it is very plain. A head of a college, whose bishoprick brings him an annual income of twelve hundred pounds a year, spends much more of it in maintaining of himself and children in pleasure and luxury, than in works of charity ; and as he liv'd profusely, dies poor. How can young girls, brought up in such a manner, get out of the miserable situation they fall into, by the death of their father ? By the road of vice ; 'tis the most beaten of any, because the easiest. Very often even the best education is not proof against necessity. The sex is frail, and it requires courage to be virtuous : and they have need of a great deal to struggle against want.

They have done all they can here to remedy this scandal. In 1678, CHARLES II. establish'd a charitable society for the relief of clergymen's widows and children, who are left destitute. But here as well as in other

countries, the greatest part of charitable foundations, serves only to enrich those who have the management of them.

Reasonable men, who are satisfy'd with the follies nature has implanted in every individual; lay themselves as little as possible under the necessity, of answering for those of others. And this is perhaps the reason that has hinder'd philosophers and eminent men in all ages from marrying. A great man in the eyes of the world, loses of the respect which is due to him, in proportion as he has any thing in common with the rest of mankind. I really think a madam NEWTON, and a madam FONTENELLE, in the opinion of many people, would injure the illustrious men whose name they bore.

Marriage often shackles the geniuses of great men; those who are free from that yoke, endeavour more earnestly to transmit their memories to posterity. There is no reason to fear this remark will diminish the number of subjects in a state; it concerns but few; nature does not produce many of them in an age.

We owe whatever has been done most useful to society, to men who had no children. Those who by their disposition can't fix that secret inclination, which induces us to love, on one person; are commonly more humane and charitable than others. This is a new reason that decides in favour of the celibacy of ecclesiastics. They must be the more animated with that charitable spirit their function

tion requires, as they have no worldly affections to divert it. The celebrated BACON himself thinks it the only state of life proper for them; *people very rarely, says he, employ themselves in watering plants, when they want water themselves.*

With regard to the people in England, it can't be deny'd, but that they are more corrupt in their morals now, than they were before the reformation. Liberty has introduc'd licentiousness among them; and licentiousness all sorts of vice. And how should the people be ashamed of what the clergy don't blush at?

We may say the first reformers follow'd the letter of the gospel, more than its meaning. They did not sufficiently meditate on this great maxim; *that we should worship God in spirit and in truth.* They have preferr'd the servile spirit of JUDAISM, to that charitable spirit, which is the foundation of Christianity. They have prescrib'd that Sunday should be kept as strictly as the Jews did their sabbath; and have made crimes of things that are in themselves the most innocent. A gentleman can't shoot a partridge in his park on a Sunday, without giving offence to his whole parish. Thus while they would oblige mankind to submit to too severe rules, they reduce them to the necessity of violating them continually.

The wiser and more enlightened discipline of our church, is more indulgent to human infirmities. After having fulfilled the duties it imposes on us, it permits us amusements

that are not criminal. It teaches us to know the spirit that enlivens, instead of enslaving us to the letter that kills.

What effect then has the reformation truly produc'd in England? Almost the total destruction of religion. It has opened a door to many sects, every one more extravagant than the other. Those who shake off the yoke of obedience, can't expect to make others submit to it. Every body will take the same liberty the reformers claim'd; and their doctrine has been reformed in its turn. The authority of the fathers and councils did not bind them, and their own has been slighted. They have submitted the scriptures to the judgment of the people, and every private person has interpreted them in his own way.

'Tis dangerous to give ear too much to human reason. Its confidence makes us misapply its force; 'tis apter to destroy than edify. The English have given their genius its full scope in point of religion, as well as in all other things; and in a country where every one forms a religion according to his own fancy, there is soon none at all. LIPSIVS remarks there were six hundred different religions at Rome; and though the same cannot be said of England at this time, yet the established religion is divided into many sects.

Toleration which produces peace and unity among the different sects in Holland, has a quite contrary effect here. The disposition of the English, which is more turbulent, may have

have some influence in that respect ; but we must consider the nature of their government to find the true cause. The dissenters have more than once united themselves against the establish'd church, only because they see with regret, the bishops with the nobility form one part of the legislative power, and possess'd of all the honours and riches that remain to the church. All we can say in favour of the first is ; that they whom the simplicity of the gospel does not permit to enjoy them, can't bear to see them in the hands of others.

These different sectaries seem only to carry it fair with each other, in order to unite their efforts against the established church ; and endeavour by making it contemptible, to diminish its power. Their inflammatory rather than religious zeal, is continually blowing the fire, that has already set the whole state in a flame.

Though it were true, politically speaking, that toleration is not dangerous where there are many parties ; yet 'tis at least so in a state, where there are but two. Men are always men ; and those who have power, abuse it. The party that complains of persecution, would persecute itself, if it were the strongest.

The liberty of the press, so advantageous for the search of truth ; becomes, by the abuse they make of it, extremely pernicious to religion. Printing, that contributed so much to the establishment of the reformation, may become still more fatal to England. They pub-

lickly print here the most dangerous books. 'Tis worthy of the wisdom of the parliament, to restrain the licentiousness of authors, which equally tend to the depravation of morals, and destruction of religion.

A thousand authors, under pretence of teaching people to *think freely*, take advantage of the liberty they have of examining every thing, to attack openly whatever is most sacred in religion, and even those articles that are received by all communions. The doctrine of the trinity, the divinity of JESUS CHRIST, and the immortality of the soul, are daily treated here as speculative matters, or points of controversy. There is a book just publish'd that denies the truth of all revelation. There is a middle way, between the rigour of the inquisition, and this excessive licentiousness; which religion permits, and good order requires, to stop the course of these scandalous books. The English, in this respect, not so wise as the Pagans; suffer the religion they profess, and even the principles of morality to be overturn'd, on which virtue and vice, and the good order and tranquillity of particulars depend.

This extreme licentiousness is the reason, that there is hardly any religion in England, among people of fashion. Those who seem to have any, are Deists. With regard to the common people, perhaps they have as much still, as they have in any country; but will they always preserve it; and may not the poison

son insensibly affect them, in proportion as the corruption becomes more general? What is not to be apprehended from the contagion of example?

The parliament, instead of thinking how to remedy this evil, endeavours only to palliate it. To blind the peoples eyes, and not let them see the change that is made in the nation, in proportion as religion diminishes and is annihilated; they build new churches to the God of the christians: * but 'tis profane policy, and not holy piety, that lays the foundations of them. To judge of religion, by the number of churches you see in London, you would think it the most religious city in the world; but too see how little they are frequented, and how the clergy are despised; to see with what irreverence this same religion is treated in the pamphlets which are daily published; you will have reason to fear it will not subsist much longer in England; unless they restrain this dangerous licentiousness.

We have reason perhaps to complain, in this respect, of the little sincerity of the divines and preachers of this country. We cannot help suspecting them either of dishonesty, with regard to what concerns their own nation; or ignorance, with regard to what concerns others.

Among the many unjust charges which they incessantly

* In the reign of queen ANN, the parliament made an act for building 50 new parish churches in London.

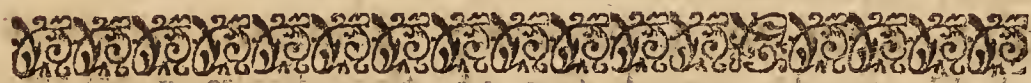
incessantly load us with, they particularly reproach us with atheism and deism, as the consequences of our adhesion to the religion of our ancestors. If you'll give credit to them, 'tis in catholic countries, and particularly in France, Spain and Italy, that you find the most atheists. The wise doctor TILLOTSON himself, has also inconsiderately imputed it to us. He advances, as confidently as falsely, in one of his sermons, that the catholic religion leads directly to atheism ; and perhaps that illustrious archbishop of Canterbury, in this, is rather to be suspected of dishonesty than error. 'Tis at least, neither the language of a judicious writer, nor of an able controversist. Treating all those he calls Papists, as Atheists ; is not reasoning, but reviling. If he were answer'd ; that there are more Atheists at this time in England, than in all the rest of Europe, and that 'tis perhaps a consequence of the reformation ; it would be a paradox, not very difficult to prove. If it has not led directly to it, it has at least occasioned that licentiousness so frequent here, which favours irreligion ; and irreligion is the source of the depravation of morals. We may at all events, oppose to doctor TILLOTSON's arguments, those of another English prelate not less eminent than himself. *All that I have observ'd,* says bishop Burnet, *during my life, with regard to the reformation, makes me think, it has much less to fear from external dangers, than*
internal

internal divisions ; which have almost totally extinguish'd christianity among us.

Thus the English reformers have done like ignorant physicians, who destroy the good humours with the bad, and kill their patients instead of curing them. Under pretence of extirpating superstition, they have, contrary to their intention, extirpated religion itself. Human reason endeavouring to shun one rock, is often shipwreck'd on another more dangerous. Men are nothing but darkness and error, and will always lose themselves without the light of faith. It is but too true, sir, for unhappy England, that the pretended reformation has rather reform'd the number of christians in it, than the morals of christianity.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LIX.

TO Mr. CREBILLON,

Critical examination of the tragedy of HAMLET, with some remarks on the author.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

THE poet SHAKESPEAR, so famous among the English, follow'd only the bent

bent of his genius in his works; and properly speaking, owes nothing to the imitation of the ancients: however, they were not entirely unknown to him, as is commonly said. We see by his tragedies of JULIUS CÆSAR and CORIOLANUS, that he was very well acquainted with the history and manners of the Romans; and I am inclin'd to think the resemblance we find between his tragedy of HAMLET, and the Greek one of Electra, is not the meer effect of chance: or rather, we may easily discover the person of ORESTES in HAMLET; which SHAKESPEAR has accommodated to his own manner of writing. You shall judge of it yourself, by the extract I am going to give you; and perhaps you'll not be displeas'd, to see how this great poet has handled a subject, which you have treated so happily on our stage.

The principal actors in this play, are Claudius, king of Denmark; Hamlet, nephew of Gertrude, and son of the former king; Gertrude, queen of Denmark, and mother of Hamlet; Polonius, great chamberlain; Ophelia, daughter of Polonius; Laertes, son of Polonius; Horatio, Hamlet's friend; the ghost of Hamlet's father, &c. The scene at Elfinore. Mr. Pope, who has published a fine edition of SHAKESPEAR'S works in 4°, says; *the history of Hamlet is not this poet's invention, but that he could not discover from whence hee took it.* *

In

* 'Tis probable he has taken the plot of it from some ancient

In the English tragedy, as well as your *Electra*, the business is to revenge the death of a king, whose brother, equally ambitious and amorous, murther'd him to seize on his crown and enjoy his wife. Hamlet, king of Denmark, was poison'd by his brother Claudius, who married his widow; which princess, as well as the wicked Clitemnestra, was an accomplice in the crimes of her new husband.

Bernardo and Francisco, two soldiers who mount the guard in the square before the palace, open the scene; they come to relieve them. After they have ask'd for the watchword, and what hour it is; one of them tells Horatio, his officer, that they saw a spirit last night. It strikes twelve, and the ghost immediately appears; it perfectly resembles the deceased king, Hamlet's father. The audience have great difficulty to preserve themselves from the terror, such scenes as these in Shakespear give them. He gives his expressions a force, that always surprises you. He animates the ghosts he makes appear. We owe part of the beauties in his works, to the bad education he receiv'd in the country, where he was born. He had a strong and lively imagination, with the finest talent for painting ideas; and by that means communicates

Lombard author, not only because we find several Italian names in it; but because he has really borrow'd several other plays from the Italians. The tragedy of *Cimbelina*, is taken in part from Bocace's *Decameron*; the plot of *Romeo and Juliet*, from one of Bandello's novels; and the history of *Othello*, or the *Moor of Venice*, is found in the novels of Cynthio.

cates to the audience, all the impressions frightful ones made on him in his youth. Three witches with their kettle, act a very great part in his tragedy of Macbeth. This poet was perfectly well acquainted with every thing relating to forcery, and took pleasure in exposing on the stage, all the ridiculous mysteries at the nocturnal meetings of witches.

Without blaming the taste of such as amuse themselves at these sorts of representations, I can't help observing, that the representing of spirits, apparitions, prodigies, &c. which are so common in Shakespear's plays, and have been so often repeated by succeeding poets ; must be dangerous : because they strike weak imaginations, and accustom them to believe them. And if they make deeper impressions on the English than other people, 'tis perhaps because they are more disposed to believe them. People of fashion in England, at this time perhaps don't believe enough, and the common people fall into the contrary extreme. In this respect the English are like the Chinese ; half of them superstitious, and the others incredulous.

However this be, Horatio tells young Hamlet of the appearing of his father's ghost ; and they go together the midnight following, into the square before the palace. The ghost appears, as soon as they come there ; and the prince speaks to it in the most pathetick manner. A man had need of the author's talent,
to

to preserve all the strength and beauty of this speech in a translation. Thus it begins in the original,

Angels and ministers of grace defend us !
Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee airs from heav'n, or blasts from
hell ;

Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape,
That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee *Hamlet*,
King, father, royal *Dane*: oh! answer me, &c.

The ghost goes from them, and makes a sign for the prince to follow it; and young HAMLET obeys. When they are alone, the ghost thus addresses itself to him :

I am thy father's spirit,
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day, confin'd to fast in fires ;
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purg'd away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young
blood,
Make thy two eyes like stars start from their
spheres, &c.

The young prince, by what is related to him at this interview, learns in what manner his father was poison'd by his own brother, and the share the queen had in this horrible crime. The ghost of HAMLET makes him swear to avenge his death; and the prince, after the apparition is vanished, exacts an oath from those present, to say nothing of what passed.

passed. You even hear the ghost, after it has disappear'd, call out to them in a terrible tone, to swear: which has a great effect upon the audience. SHAKESPEAR in such scenes as this, demonstrates he was a great poet; the more unnatural they are, the more art and force he makes use of, to bear himself up in them.

In the second act, HAMLET, before he undertakes any thing, proposes to have a play, which he wrote expressly on the murder of his father, and his mother's crime, acted by some comedians they present to him. He distrusts the ghost, and fears it may be a damn'd soul come from hell, purposely to incite him to commit a wicked action; and hopes by the effect the representation will have on the king, to discover whether he be really guilty of the crime the ghost accuses him of.

In the third act, this play is acted before the king, queen and the whole court. The king troubled by the remorse of his conscience, can't bear a sight that recalls to his mind all the horror of his crime. He goes away, the play is not finish'd, and HAMLET is convinc'd of the king's guilt.

The greatest beauty of this act, and perhaps of the whole tragedy, is HAMLET's famous soliloquy; in which he examines whether an unhappy man might kill himself or not. Mr. VOLTAIRE has translated it into verse, in which he has given all the force of the original, and therefore I shall refer you to that. *

There

* *Melanges de literature & de philosophie*, chap. xxi.

There are also beauties in the scene, where the king finds himself tormented by the remorse of his conscience.

Oh my offence is rank, it smells to heav'n,
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't;
A brother's murther.---Pray alas! I cannot:
Though inclination be as sharp as 'twill,
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
And like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood?
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heav'ns
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves
mercy,

But to confront the visage of offence?
And what's in prayer, but this two-fold
force,

To be fore-stalled ere we come to fall,
Or pardon'd being down? Then I'll look up.
My fault is past. But oh what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? *Forgive me my foul
murther!*

That cannot be, since I am still possess'd
Of those effects, for which I did the mur-
ther,

My crown, mine own ambition, and my
queen.

May one be pardon'd, and retain th' of-
fence?

In the corrupted currents of this world,
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;

And oft 'tis seen, the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law ; but 'tis not so above : &c.

In the midst of this perturbation of mind, the miserable king incessantly begs forgiveness, at least as well as he is able. He falls on his knees to recommend himself to the angels ; and HAMLET coming to assassinate him, and finding him at prayers, would not do it, for fear he should send his soul to heaven. His words are :

A villain kills my father, and for that
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heav'n---O this is hire and salary, not re-
venge.

He took my father grossly, full of bread,
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as
May ;

And how his audit stands, who knows, save
heav'n ?

But in our circumstance and course of thought,
'Tis heavy with him. Am I then reveng'd,
To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and season'd for his passage ?
Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid
bent :

When he is drunk, asleep, or in his rage,
Or in th' incestuous pleasure of his bed,
At gaming, swearing, or about some act,
That has no relish of salvation in't ;
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at
heav'n,

And

And that his soul may be as damn'd and
black

As hell, whereto it goes.

I remember abbé PREVOT, in his comparison of the tragedies of ELECTRA, and HAMLET; commends the English poet, because wiser than SOPHOCLES, he forbids young HAMLET, by the apparition of the ghost in the first act, to attempt any thing against his mother's life.

But howsoever thou pursu'ft this act,
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught; leave her to
heav'n,

And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
To prick and sting her.

But I am surpris'd that judicious author did not observe the fault SHAKESPEAR commits, in this scene of the third act; which perhaps is greater for a christian poet, than the other was for an author, who liv'd in the darkness of paganism. HAMLET kills his father's murtherer, only to damn him. I don't know whether there is not as much childishness as indecency, in this thought of refin'd vengeance. The French critick ought not to have let this fault escape him; and if he perceiv'd it, why did not he mention it? The English authors have their defects, as well as their beauties; and we can't indeed be too

much on our guard, in criticism; 'tis better to be too indulgent than too severe. But why should not we avoid all extremes? When we give an author his due praise, we ought to be permitted to condemn, whatever is truly blameable in him.

As to you, sir, who would not in your *Electra* contradict a fact recorded by all the ancients, you have found means to make use of it so artfully, that 'tis one of the greatest beauties of your play. SHAKESPEAR only avoided the difficulty, SOPHOCLES could not overcome; you, more dexterous than either of them, have conquer'd it. ORESTES, according to the Pagan system, push'd on by fate, and blinded by the avenging furies, stabs his mother without designing it, just as that princess was going to lay hold on his arm, which was rais'd to strike ÆGYSTUS. Notwithstanding some scenes, which perhaps you have neglected too much; and what plays are there perfect in all respects? your *Electra* is one of the finest tragedies that ever appear'd upon any stage.

I return to SHAKESPEAR. HAMLET'S grief, and the affected singularity of his discourse, make the king and queen his mother think him a madman. He has at the end of the third act, a scene with the queen; where he reproaches her with the crime she has committed, in such violent terms, as frights her. As he obliges her to sit and hear his reproaches, the queen, terrify'd at the condition she sees him in, calls POLONIUS, the
great

great chamberlain, to her aid, who was conceal'd behind the hangings, to assist her in case of necessity. HAMLET kills him. The ghost appears again in this scene, but produces no great effect.

This death occasions a sort of comedy, which takes up almost all the fourth act. OPHELIA, POLONIUS's daughter, upon hearing of his death, goes distracted. She is belov'd by HAMLET, but so little, and in so odd a manner, that 'tis not worth taking notice of. Unhappy OPHELIA, who has lost her senses, appears in various scenes to do, say and sing a thousand extravagances. She concludes her part by drowning herself. As soon as LAERTES, her brother, hears of POLONIUS's death, he is enrag'd at the king, whom he thinks guilty of it. CLAUDIUS wards off the blow he saw threaten'd him, by convincing him 'twas HAMLET who kill'd the great chamberlain. The king advises LAERTES to revenge his death, which he promises to do, and executes in the manner you will see.

The fifth act begins with a dialogue between two grave-diggers. One of whom says, ADAM was the first man of their profession; and then the other desires to know if ADAM was a gentleman. The first asks who builds stronger than any architect; the second answers; a gallows-maker or grave-digger: and after some other conversation of the same nature, which I think not worth relating, we come to the scene, so much boasted of by

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the

the English, between HAMLET and one of the grave-diggers. It begins with several poor jests on the part of the grave-digger, and is ended by HAMLET with common place morality, on the vanity of mankind, and the equality death establishes among them: all occasion'd by a skull, which the grave-digger says was YORICK's, the king's jester; that HAMLET was intimately acquainted with in his childhood. SHAKESPEAR was a great genius, but I would not search for proofs of it, in this scene.

Unhappy OPHELIA's body is to be laid in this grave; the priests, the king, queen and HAMLET, and all the attendants on the funeral arrive at it. OPHELIA's body is hardly laid in the grave, before her brother leaps into it; and HAMLET after him. Here this young prince, whom we had seen a little before moralising very emphatically, grapples with LAERTES upon the very coffin that incloses the dead body of his mistress, and then says:

I lov'd OPHELIA; forty thousand brothers
 Could not with all their quantity of love
 Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for
 her?

Come shew me what thou'lt do.

Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast?
 woo't tear thy self?

Woo't drink up Nile? woo't eat a croco-
 dile?

I'll do't.

I pass over the rest of this act, as useless ; to come to the catastrophe. The king and LAERTES, who have contriv'd HAMLET's death, design to kill him, by means of a challenge, in which LAERTES, under pretence of shewing his dexterity, is to revenge POLONIUS, his father's death, on the prince. The king pretends to have laid six Barbary horses, against six French swords, that HAMLET would have the better in such a combat. The young prince accepts the challenge ; and the whole court assembles in the place, where they were to try their dexterity in arms. A table is spread there, cover'd with different sorts of wines ; the king drinks to HAMLET's health. There is a poison'd cup, designed for the prince ; which the queen, in pledging the king, drinks of by mistake. The combatants skirmish as well as they are able, to the sound of drums and trumpets. LAERTES wounds HAMLET with a poison'd sword, which, the prince who is ignorant of it, forces from him, but is obliged to quit his own at the same time. HAMLET, by this forced exchange of swords, arm'd with the poison'd one, wounds LAERTES with it in his turn ; and he knowing he must die, reveals his wicked attempt to him.

----- HAMLET, thou art slain,
No medicine in the world can do thee good.
In thee there is not half an hour of life ;
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
Unbated and envenom'd : the foul practice

Hath turn'd itself on me. Lo, here I lye,
 Never to rise again ; thy mother'd poison'd ;
 I can no more--the king, the king's to blame.

HAMLET, with the same sword, stabs his father's murtherer. They die one after another, the stage is crowded with dead bodies ; and several of this author's tragedies end much in the same manner.

I will not say how long time the representation of this play requires ; it would be difficult for SHAKESPEAR himself, to tell you exactly. I have not mentioned a great many other scenes, either too long, or forreign to the subject. There are few of this author's works, that might not have three fourths of them retrench'd.

These, sir, are the tragedies that are now acted daily on the stage at London ; 'tis true, the English in this respect preceeded us, and SHAKESPEAR wrote at a time, when we had not even a play-house ; but our neighbours have made but a small progress in theatrical performances since that time. If the plays of their modern authors, are more regular than SHAKESPEAR's ; they have not near their beauties. He understood how to paint all the passions, except love ; and though the littlenesses, which are frequently found in his works, displease, the sublimity of his genius surprises much more. With all his defects, he is the greatest tragick author the English ever had. But is it really true, that we ought
 at

at this time, to consider them as our masters in this respect? Is it really true, that we can't equal them in any sort of writing whatever?

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LX.

To Monsieur DE BUFFONS;

Observations on the complaints against luxury in England; and its advantages and disadvantages to a state.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

ENGLAND is the country where they inveigh the most against luxury, and that even in the very places, which luxury, that is to say, a taste for superfluous things, has established; I mean the coffee-houses, where so many idle people spend great part of their time, and where they speak much more than they think. However, most of those who condemn it in their discourse, prove at least by their conduct, that they like its effects.

Luxury exasperates the malecontents; and authors of all ranks, from the most eminent to the mere hirelings; from mr. POPE down
to

to the writers of the *Crafts-man**; all complain bitterly against the present luxury in London.

Some perplex'd how to procure themselves the necessaries of life; perhaps for want of industry, or fearing the labour, repine at seeing others more happy, enjoy all the advantages that are the consequence of riches. They enviously condemn those, they have not the courage to imitate. Others, whose pride would subject all to their way of thinking, treat every thing as superfluous, which is so to them; and all of them veil their chagrin, under the specious pretence, of love for their country.

A man, without being used to the luxury of Paris, would be astonish'd at these declamations; and seeks in vain on what they can be founded: one does not find the English set up for making a figure, either in their clothes or equipages; one sees their household furniture as plain as sumptuary laws could prescribe it. Guilding, glassés and brassés, are ornaments that are found but in very few houses here; and if the tables of the English are not remarkable for their frugality, they are at least so for their plainness. In short, what we call luxury in France, does not appear to be the virtue or vice of this country.

'Tis

* My lord B——, whom doctor SWIFT calls the *greatest genius in Europe*; and mr. P——, sir ROBERT WALPOLE'S most powerful enemy in the house of commons, have writ many pieces in this political journal: others who succeeded them without their abilities, have since made it despicable.

'Tis true, all things are relative, and though the ostentation of Paris does not appear in London, they fall into other sorts of superfluity. And 'tis even impossible it should be otherwise. Men, out of a natural emulation, spend more, in proportion as they live in more populous places. When alone, they neglect themselves, and more frequently abandon themselves to a rude and unpolished, than plain manner of life; because they have no object before their eyes to incite their self-love. We must have too much virtue to renounce the advantages, riches give us over others. We don't possess them with indifference. Some accumulate them, out of a foolish avarice; and others squander them away, out of a ridiculous vanity. To see mankind continually fall into excesses, looks as if free-will was confined to the choice of vices.

Should the English, a people so philosophical, and so little subject to prejudices, declaim against luxury? It seems in many respects to be the father of labour and industry; and with them may be considered as the support of their commerce. You, sir, who know the principles of our virtues and vices, know, that when men have once gotten the necessaries of life, they only labour afterwards to gratify the different desires of their self-love. Confine them to necessaries only, you discourage industry, you ruin arts, you change their manners; in short, you reduce them almost to the condition of savages. There will then be no occasion

occasion to unite in society, and build cities ; we have nothing to do but to go and live in the forests. Luxury has, doubtless, its inconveniencies ; riches disorder most mens heads. One would live in sumptuous houses, another would make a figure by his equipages ; but the different workmen their vanity employs, profit by their folly. The vices of some, turn to the advantage of others. Some particular persons who imprudently ruin themselves, enrich many others who are wiser, and more useful to the state, because they labour.

The chagrin of the English who rail at luxury, hinders them from giving attention to the close connexion there is, between that commerce which is so advantageous to them, and the luxury they so severely condemn. What do their numerous ships go to bring from the two extremities of the earth, but the objects of luxury? To expect the English should be contented with communicating them to other nations, without enjoying themselves the fruits of their commerce, is requiring a thing equally unjust and impossible. I know an example might be produc'd from some of our neighbours, but we should do wrong in concluding any thing from thence ; what is practicable for one nation, is not for another. The form of government makes this difference. Besides, men do not always refrain from luxury out of temperance, and we should be blameable, to praise that in them as wisdom, which
is

is often only the effect of their attachment to the most sordid avarice.

Luxury is incontestably dangerous to a small state, depriv'd of the advantages of commerce, and that has no resource but its oeconomy. Geneva could not subsist without the sumptuary laws which are in force there; but it may enrich a nation as powerful and populous as ours is, because it will make the people more industrious, and apply themselves more to trade. For a long time it produc'd only soldiers; but since it has shar'd the riches of the *new world*, with the other nations of Europe, it has cultivated arts and sciences, and produc'd great men in all of them.

Luxury does not only promote commerce, but it also contributes, as the English themselves find by experience, to make arts and manufactures flourish; more abundant sources of riches than mines of gold. Those who possess them, are not the most powerful; they are oblig'd to submit to the people of those countries, which produce only iron-mines. The Europeans who are most enrich'd by this metal, for which we do every thing, and by which we do every thing; are those, who best know how to give it the various forms, to which the vanity of mankind has destin'd it. A mark of gold, is often made worth more than double its value, by passing through German's hands. What value do the wools we purchase out of England and Spain acquire, at the Gobelins and at Beauvais!

In

In a country where the lands are cultivated, the more manufactures there are, the more advantageous will be its commerce with its neighbours. All men love superfluities, because all men are vain. How much does France gain every year by its silks, laces, and fashions; and all the novelties that luxury produces in it? It looks as if we only adopted them, to draw our neighbours into the snare. 'Tis, says an author who has lately written upon the commerce of England; *a piece of policy in the French, to keep the English dependent on their fashions; whatever little attention some people give to this abuse, it costs us many millions yearly, and sensibly diminishes our commerce with foreign nations.** We should be as blameable to overvalue ourselves, for our superiority in these trifling things; as we should be, to neglect them. Whatever efforts the English may make to prevent the ill consequences of it, so long as we encourage arts, they will always pay us the same tribute. The folly of particulars is always stronger than the policy of their governors.

They declaim against luxury, in England, and preach sedition! what an inconsistency in so wise a people! A state suffers more, from the horrors of a civil war, in one day; than it can from excessive luxury in an age. 'Tis an evil that attends on riches and plenty, but perhaps

* JOSHUAH GEE, in his treatise on the commerce and navigation of Great-Britain.

perhaps the want of them would cause a greater.

The authors of these continual complaints, should reflect, that all things which are not absolutely necessary, may be considered as luxury; especially when they are consum'd in a state that does not produce them. At this rate they should prohibit their countrymen from drinking wine; 'tis a consequence of their principles. At all events, 'tis certain the English would be less subject to this sort of luxury, if they were more addicted to that, these declaimers so vehemently reproach them with. But those who believe it inconsistent with the welfare of their country, to import embroider'd clothes into it; do not perhaps reflect, that the consumption of strong waters distill'd in Barbadoes, is of as dangerous consequence. A vice that pleases us, seems to us only a lawful taste; and every taste contrary to ours, we name a vice.

The difference in the conditions, constitutions, and inclinations of mankind; makes it impossible to determine what is really luxury or frugality, in particular persons, and prescribe their exact limits. Reason requires, that some should be permitted to spend more than others; all that can be said on this subject is, that this liberty ought not to extend so far, as to convey the source of the public treasure of the nation, to foreigners. Too great a taste for superfluity, and imaginary necessities, may bring a nation into all the inconveniencies,

niencies, that are the consequence of boundless luxury; but that would be a mistaken frugality, which should prohibit all commerce that can be carried on, by exchange of merchandise. If the English take none of ours, can they reasonably hope that we will take theirs? Are there not countries where they cannot possibly traffick, without exchanging what their island or colonies furnish them with, against the produce of their neighbour's climates?

That sobriety produces plenty, is not always true. I will suppose the government in a large state, should all at once oblige every particular inhabitant, to spend only half what he did, in his table, clothes, &c. This saving would be a meer loss to the society; because they could not export it to foreigners, who would have no occasion of this increase. Commerce is only carried on by exchange; we must give and receive.

It must be own'd, with regard to luxury, that there is a sort of contradiction between morality and policy. And how difficult is it to reconcile them in many other things! As much as it seems the interest of the one, in certain cases, to encourage it; so much it is indeed always the interest of the other, to banish it. It undeniably contributes to the corruption of morals. But in a state that abounds with riches, if it is not a necessary evil; it is at least almost an inevitable one. Sumptuary laws rather change the species of luxury, than correct

correct its excesses. What must those who are at the head of government do in this case? Imitate the wise author of nature, who draws a general good from particular evils.

'Tis not justifying the vices of particulars, to make them contribute as much as possible to the publick good. Covetous men do more injury to the society, by keeping their gold locked up in their coffers; than spendthrifts who sacrifice all they have, to their caprice; however they are both equally blameable: for if we consider these two faults, in their first causes only, and not in their effects, they are both equally bad. If the children of such as have made very considerable fortunes, ruin themselves as ridiculously, as their fathers enrich'd themselves shamefully; 'tis only a misfortune to themselves; or rather, 'tis a sort of restitution they make to the society. When all the indeavours of morality to make mankind wiser, are useless, policy ought at least to apply itself to drawing advantage from their folly.

We French have a very great obligation to luxury; one of our authors * has very judiciously observ'd, that it has banish'd drunkenness, formerly so frequent among us, out of our cities, and the army; and that the latter now seems to be retired into the country, where the former is not yet arriv'd.

All things here justify his observations; as luxury has not made the same progress at Lon-

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H

don,

* Mr. MELLON, in his essay on commerce.

don, it has at Paris; drunkenness is more common among all ranks of people : and in the country towns of England, almost general. Is it not shameful for the two universities, that the students learn smocking and drinking in them, as much as they do Greek and Latin ? 'Tis not yet known which of the two forms the better humanists, or the greater drinkers.

Nevertheless all English writers speak against luxury good eating and French cookery : and hardly one of them against the tavern, French wines or drunkenness. Whoever has a good cook, is expos'd to the shafts of satire ; but they don't upbraid him in the least, who professes to get drunk every day of his life : though the first is perhaps only responsible for a folly ; and the other guilty of real vice. At least, why do they not treat them both alike ? Why is there any exception of vices ? Every thing ought to be equally condemn'd, that is equally contrary to good manners. The reason why they don't drink in Spain, is, because the dishonour that attends drunkenness in that country, is a sufficient motive to restrain them from the love of wine. In England, they publickly give themselves up to a passion ; which those, whose duty it is to set an example, don't blush at themselves.

Mr. ADDISON, in one of his *Spectators*, says, he should be glad the parliament would make an act, to prevent the importation of French ribbons into England ; perhaps they would do a more essential service to the nation,

on, by intirely prohibiting the entry of our *Bordeaux* wines. Our fashions and other baubles draw much less money out of the kingdom; and don't injure it so much as our wines and brandies.

I think a man of quality, frequents a play-house, with a better grace, than a tavern. 'Tis observ'd here, that they are the soberest, who are most upbraided with luxury. Our French officers, whom we see quit idleness and the pleasures of Paris, at the first signal; and expose themselves with so much alacrity to fatigues, and dare the dangers of war; have hitherto sufficiently prov'd, that luxury does not effeminate. But nobody can doubt that wine does not make a man brutish; and in this country particularly, an Englishman is frequently worn out at thirty, and a downright beast at forty.

Most French sacrifice every thing, except their honour, to pleasure; but circumstances of affairs, seem to change their character: for though voluptuous and idle in peace, we find them active and indefatigable in war. The young men, who frequently displease us at Paris, by their follies; in the camp, are intent only upon their duty. Perhaps 'tis not at present only that we have seen luxury, which seems to inspire nothing but effeminacy, compatible with bravery: CÆSAR used to say, that his soldiers fought, even when they were perfum'd. The modern French still resemble the Gauls of that time. Men are no-

thing but a heap of contradictions. We have seen the weakneses of the female sex, join'd with the most distinguishing virtues of the other. According to PLUTARCH, SURENA, general of the PARTHIANS, and the bravest man in their nation, painted his face. Tis undeniable however, that luxury is very dangerous in an army ; it gives their enemies advantages ; which ours have but too often laid hold on. It is the duty of the commanders to restrain its excesses, and keep up in that respect, all the severity of military discipline.

I'll conclude this letter, sir, with relating to you an adventure, that happen'd to me this morning. An Englishman that I was acquainted with in France, came to see me ; he is as peevish as well-affected to his country. After he had long entertain'd me with the calamities of his country, and I was waiting upon him to the door ; he perceiv'd a box in the antichamber, and desir'd to know what it was. He was told it was sweet-meats, just arriv'd from France. He immediately fell into a passion ; what a shame is it, says he to me ; and why must my lord---have French sweet-meats at his table ; when his father, who was as great a nobleman as himself, eat salt-beef and cabbage ! French sweet-meats ! Alas, sir, what luxury ! Poor England is undone !

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.

LET-



LETTER LXI.

To Mr. DU CLOS,

Of the excessive liberties taken by the French-women, and their influence over the men.

STAMFORD, &c.

S I R,

INstead of communicating to you some observations on the manners of this country, I send you the copy of a letter, on ours; which the duke of R--- has lately receiv'd from Paris. The author of it, makes you very sensible of the inconveniencies occasion'd by those customs of ours, which he condemns; but says not a word of the advantages resulting from them: and this alone ought to render him suspected. A man of judgment, never determines any thing, 'till he has examin'd both sides of the question. Some compensations are to be made in matters of this nature; Good and evil are so blended together in human affairs, that they mutually succeed each other. We have not the simplicity of manners, our ancestors had; but they are more gentle. The women in France, are not so reserv'd as in England; but we find charms in their company, which

those of this country have not. The one by their aukwardness, have the defect of making virtue itself disagreeable ; the others more engaging, have often the pernicious art of making vice seem amiable. Besides, I appeal to you, who have painted coquets in such lively colours ; whether all French-women are such, as this Englishman seems to insinuate. The happy strokes that characterize madam SELVES, had not succeeded so well, if you had not taken them from nature ; they who have never observ'd them in it, have too bad an idea of womankind, and don't know the power fine thoughts have over men, who only endeavour to please, in order to inspire them. There are few of those, who sacrifice every thing to caprice, that don't suffer themselves to be conquer'd by reason ; when she presents herself to them, dress'd in all the charms, you have the art to adorn her with. Vice is never so dangerous even to libertins, as when it puts on the mask of virtue to seduce them.

Is it surprizing that we French, should look upon the fair-sex as the soul of society, which heaven has endow'd with the charms that contribute most to make it agreeable ? We owe the politeness our neighbours glory in imitating, to our way of living with women ; and which is condemn'd by none but those, who strive in vain to acquire it.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.

L E T-

Mr. P---'s Letter, *To his grace the duke of*
R---.

MY LORD,

“ I T seems very extraordinary to me ,
“ that the politest and most gallant na-
“ tion in Europe, should have the most inju-
“ rious laws to the fair-sex ; and that women
“ should rule the most absolutely over men, in
“ a country where they are refus'd the right of
“ succeeding to the crown : they have enjoy'd
“ for a long time, so absolute a power in
“ France, that I can't comprehend why they
“ have not had the *salick-law* repeal'd. We
“ are not near so attentive to the preservation
“ of our liberties in England, as the ladies in
“ France are to the extension of theirs. They
“ have here attain'd to the reducing the men,
“ to the most submissive dependence on them.
“ Marriage, with the French, is only a ce-
“ remony that frees the sex from the bondage
“ of decorum ; and privileges those to do eve-
“ ry thing, whose inclinations are corrupt e-
“ nough to dare it. Women for the most
“ part, only marry, to have a right to keep
“ an open house ; where their husbands are
“ less welcome than strangers. How many
“ husbands are there unknown to those, who
“ dine and sup every day at their houses ?
“ They are as absolutely unknown, as if they

“ such an inversion of manners can produce.

“ I had by my side a young fellow, powder’d, curl’d and perfum’d; who I perceived belong’d to the law, by his insipid discourse and formal air. A man is not here a week, before he can distinguish those of that profession, by these two characteristics. Though he seem’d to me in perfect health, he did not drink a drop of wine during the whole supper, and pretended his health oblig’d him to drink water. ’Tis the custom of young people of fashion here. They affect to observe the most exact regimen, as much as ours to give themselves up to the most excessive debauchery. Such is the force of example on a nation, which has been long upbraided with levity and effeminacy. Men of sense submit to customary extravagancies, through reason; and young fellows appear reasonable, out of folly. Thus, through meer imitation, and contrary to their natural taste, some affect a vice that pleases; and others imitate at least, a modish virtue.

“ In France, where caprice determines every thing; they drink, eat, are sober or intemperate: in short, they are sick or well, as the fashion prescribes. ’Tis not genteel now to have good health, and a robust constitution; a man would look too much like a tradesman. Weak stomachs have been modish many years; and boasting of them, is a modest way of telling others, we have
“ distin-

“ distinguish’d ourselves in the career of gal-
“ lantry : when perhaps the person, who has
“ the silly vanity to aspire to this reputation,
“ has never made the least progress in it.

“ It must be own’d, the cheer at those tables
“ who set the mode, is made for weak appe-
“ tites ; solid food is banished from them, and
“ nothing appears there, but meats that can
“ flatter sickly appetites, and are of easy dige-
“ stion. When I told them how much we
“ valu’d a sir-loin of beef, they laugh’d at the
“ coarseness of our taste. I heard that nobo-
“ dy eats roast-meat now but tradesmen, and
“ that legs of mutton are never seen at ta-
“ ble, except in the country. Nothing now
“ appears, at nice tables in Paris, but light
“ courses and fine dainty dishes. The food
“ upon the table, is like the discourse at it ;
“ all solidity is banish’d : there must be no-
“ thing but what is genteel.

“ The French boast very much of their
“ modern cookery, and it has made some
“ profelites in England ; but ’tis only here,
“ one can well know all its delicacy : and
“ for my part, I am still too much used to our
“ own, to esteem the French, so much per-
“ haps as it deserves. My taste is neither re-
“ fin’d enough, nor my understanding exten-
“ sive enough for it.

“ I must own to my shame, I am but very
“ little improv’d, both by reading the best au-
“ thors on this subject ; and the pains some
“ people, eminent in this science, took to
“ form

“ form my taste. I have seen some of them
“ preside at the examination of famous cooks;
“ and 'tis a sight worthy of a stranger's curio-
“ sity. The French give an attention at this
“ sort of public acts, they don't always do in
“ matters of the highest importance. The
“ examination of a cook, is with them an af-
“ fair of the utmost consequence. There are
“ at Paris, a sort of jury's experienc'd in good
“ cheer, who are summon'd on these occasi-
“ ons; and by whose decisions all those re-
“ gulate themselves, who would pass for per-
“ sons that keep delicate tables.

“ I should have suspected some œconomy
“ in this reformation, that has been lately
“ made in the tables at Paris; if one of these
“ doctors had not assur'd me; the dish that
“ seem'd the plainest, and which I lik'd the
“ least, often cost more at present, than a
“ whole entertainment did, fifty years ago.
“ Luxury is come to that pitch, that the art
“ of cookery consists in expending a great
“ deal, without an appearance of expence.
“ If this be the case, I own that the French
“ cooks are in this respect the greatest men in
“ the world. This elegant frugality, com-
“ par'd to the simple plenty at our tables, on-
“ ly presents to me an air of parcimony, that
“ often displeases me. A man had need both to
“ reflect on what is said to him, and have
“ great confidence in the person that says it; to
“ be thoroughly convinc'd this apparent saving-
“ ness is a secret profusion. They indeed
“ serve

“ serve up many dishes, but they have com-
“ monly very little in them.

“ ’Tis the ladies, my lord, who have in-
“ troduc’d these refinements in cookery, and
“ these changes in the fashions. The French
“ Petits-maitres were formerly drunkards, but
“ they have succeeded in making them wa-
“ ter-drinkers. They have too much influ-
“ ence over manners; by reforming them
“ in some respects, they have perhaps cor-
“ rupted them in others. By making the
“ young men soberer, it is to be fear’d they
“ have made them more effeminate. One
“ vice imperceptibly takes the place of a-
“ nother. Man is of such a nature; that
“ you may change him, without correcting
“ him.”

I have the honour to be,

My lord,

your most humble, &c.

L E T-



L E T T E R LXII.

To Mr. FRÉRET;

The Latin and Greek languages not so much studied in France as in England; learning influenc'd by fashion, and the English, at present one of the learned languages in France.

LONDON, &c.

S I R,

I Have sent according to the direction you gave me, Moses Chorene's *History of Armenia*, translated by WHISTON, and the Oxford edition of TATIAN's works, printed in 1700, as you desired. Doctor BENTLEY's nephew, who has been return'd hither some time, has acquainted the learned English with the work in which you propose to determine the certainty of the *ancient CHINESE history*, and rectify the chronology of that nation. They wait impatiently for it, in order to translate it; and I am certain you will give all the light in it, the subject is capable of. You have that philosophical genius, very rare even among the learned, which submits all things to reason. As you are acquainted with all the sciences,

sciences, you can on all subjects, make use of the mutual helps they afford each other. Most of those who apply themselves to learning, are not philosophical enough; and on the other hand, our modern philosophers are not learn'd enough; but you, sir, are very different from both of them: neither names nor sciences impose on you; and indeed the first fruits we ought to receive from humane knowledge, are to know how to value it.

As overladen as old doctor BENTLEY's books are, with a heavy and sometimes conjectural learning; yet you had better converse with them, than himself. You knew our celebrated abbée LONGUERUE; the learned Englishman you enquire after, resembles him very much. He is a man full of Greek and Latin, and fitter to give one a distaste for learning in general, than an esteem for a man of learning; and I am not surpris'd at it: every body who shuts himself up from the world, and spends his whole life among books, contracts an aukard formality that makes his company as disagreeable, as his learning should make it desirable.

Such is the character of most Englishmen of learning, because they are commonly confin'd within the dust of their colleges; but if they have more pedants among them, perhaps our people are too superficial. Latin and Greek literature, are much more cultivated in England at present, than in France. The universities of Oxford and Cambridge are full of men
of

of the greatest learning. The taste for philosophy in France, has almost totally destroy'd that for polite learning.

I own it, and I own it with regret, our natural inconstancy extends to all objects. The sciences as well as manners with us, are influenc'd by fashion. According to the genius, or caprice of those who are most eminent in the republick of letters, we cultivate the various sciences they addict themselves to; and their examples are laws to us. We write romances or fairy tales, are poets or geometri-
cians. Every body instead of following his own taste, consults only the reigning one; and applies himself to that species of learning he has the least genius for, because 'tis most in fashion. A man who was form'd by nature only to blow a reed-pipe, is not afraid to put on the buskin. No sooner does a work begin to be celebrated in the world, but those whose geniusses are the direct reverse of the author's, endeavour in vain to imitate it. The author of Tan-Sai, owes the greatest part of his success to the beauty and elegance of his style.

Who by expression to fine thoughts adds
grace,

Makes all things pass, for all things pass. *

Those who have no talent to write any thing but downright obscenity, I will venture to fore-
say, will not want copiers. La Fontaine's fables were not written for children only;

* La Fontaine.

ly ; the fifth of the fourth book, contains a lesson, many of our authors stand in great need of.

We may say the learned English still pay a true regard to the ancients. This nation so philosophical is not so in all respects ; and their love of liberty does not prevent their being slaves to their prejudices, in several cases. We perhaps in France, give at present into the contrary extreme. Those among us who first raised their standard against the ancients, intended only to abolish a superstition, that might suppress emulation, and shackle the genius ; but their boldness has been as fatal to learning, as it ought naturally to have been advantageous to it. Their disciples have abus'd their principles. Some have been bold enough, instead of an extravagant esteem for the great men of antiquity, to substitute a certainly much unjust and more pernicious contempt. The one were wrong, in desiring the works of the ancients should be the sole rule of the moderns ; the others more so, in not agreeing, that tho' they had faults, which we ought to avoid, yet that we could not do better in many respects, than take them for our patterns.

In France, they don't study the language of the PLATOS and HOMERS enough ; learning is too much neglected there, to say nothing more. 'Tis easily perceiv'd by the works of our modern authors, that they are very little conversant with those great geniuses. By forsaking the paths they have mark'd out for us, and which so many authors in the age of

LEWIS

LEWIS XIV happily trod in ; we have stray'd from the fountains of taste and truth.

This neglect of the ancients, which we are fallen into ; is infinitely more prejudicial to us, than the blind prepossession we had for them formerly, could ever have been. That which many people have at present in favour of the English, is perhaps as extravagant ; and I wish it may not become as hurtful to us. Philosophy has made their works fashionable ; geometry is now the science most esteem'd. Because the English are the greatest geometricians, they would also have us regard them as our masters in other kinds of learning. We have lately made their language, one of the learned languages ; even the women learn it, and have renounc'd the Italian, to study that of this philosophical people. There is not one of them in the provinces of Armande and Belise, that will not learn English. You, sir, who understand that language, know what advantage the sex will receive from it. What a fine source of amusement, and what a School for manners, is the English stage ! Besides, how will they improve themselves in charms and sprightliness of wit, by reading their political pamphlets !

If criticks were wiser, what use might they be of to the common-wealth of learning ; they might be its support, but they disgrace their authority themselves, by the bad use they make of it. They are more animated, out of a mean jealousy, against those who distin-

guish themselves in learning ; than with a true zeal against the abuses that creep into it. * Among those who at present assume the title of men of learning, some don't value learning enough ; and others, don't esteem good sense so much as they ought : and both the one and the others have commonly their reasons for thinking as they do. Sense is only the instrument, and learning the matter we ought to apply it to ; besides, what we call by this name in France, is often nam'd quite differently in other countries : the fashionable sense at present, is only a weak instrument, and can never serve to build any thing solid. A man of sense without learning, is like a child who employs a great deal of pains, and sometimes art, to build a house of cards. A man of learning without good sense is only a day-labourer ; who digs the stones out of the quarry, and at best can only pile 'em on a heap. He that is both one and t'other, is the true architect ; and such were the Bayles and La Monnoyes. We have still some, as well as yourself, to whom we can, by the consent of all Europe, do this justice. The presidents Bouhier and Montesquieu, Abbé Gédovin, mr. De Bosc, and some more of your academical brethren are of that number. But on the other hand, how many masons have we, in all sorts of learning, that intermeddle in architecture ?

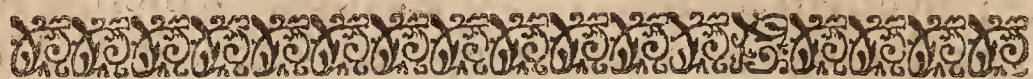
In

* *In van spori, quel premio che ripose
Alle fatiche in ciel ; s'altro no sei,
Che impaccio alle grand' Alme e generose.
L'abbate Metastasio.*

In England, all authors serve their apprenticeship to political pamphlets; in France, to criticism and romances. The passion of the youth of our age, is judging. They will peremptorily decide in every thing; before they know any thing; they will instruct others, before they have taken the pains to instruct themselves: in short they commence authors at leaving the school. And what do they do? Criticize. That is to say, do what requires the greatest experience. Our age, say they, is more enlightn'd than the preceeding ones; but who are we oblig'd to for it? 'Tis not to the glimmering lights that are so common now, but to those strong lights that shone in the last age. If knowledge is more generally diffus'd, men rich in learning are only become more scarce by it. All people are wits; all write well; but there are but few men at present, of genius and true learning! Don't let us suffer ourselves to be impos'd on by our forward wits; they take flight sooner, but they don't fly so high. LEWIS XIV's age will appear to posterity, the age of wonders for learning; and ours perhaps, only that of little prodigies.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXIII.

To the Marquess of LOMELLINI,

The Genoese envoy at the court of France ;

Of the means PETER the great made use of, to civilize and enrich his subjects ; that commerce, arms and learning, have a mutual connexion ; and commerce not regarded enough in France, tho' she owes all her greatness to it.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

YOU'LL receive the history of the Ottoman empire, * which you desir'd me to send you ; sooner than you expected. The courier of his excellency the English ambassador was pleas'd to charge himself with it. His highness prince CANTEMIR ought to be contented with the reception the English have given his father's work, translated into their language ; † and is himself the most capable of any man, of giving us one equally interesting to us.

I

* By Demetrius Cantemir, prince of Moldavia.

† Printed at London, by KNAPTON, 1734. This history has also been since translated into French, and printed at Paris, by BARROIS, 1743.

I mean a history of Russia, wanted both by his own country, and Europe, which is so much concern'd at present to know it. He attempted in vain to engage some English to work at it; and having since learn'd that abbé HUBERT, your acquaintance, had form'd a plan for it; he gave him all the encouragement he could, to execute it. I know abbé HUBERT, by his correspondence with foreign countries, has already got some curious memoirs of the reign of PETER the Great; but no man who does not go to Petersburg, to learn the Russian language, and consult the originals, can give us any other than a very imperfect history, of that powerful monarchy.

The Czar PETER chose the surest and most unfrequented road, to arrive at true glory; he founded his greatness on the happiness of his subjects, and endeavour'd to make his empire more powerful, only by making them richer. No prince understood the advantages of commerce, better than he did, or took wiser measures to make it flourish in his dominions. He went himself into the most civiliz'd nations of Europe, to acquire the knowledge of those arts, that were wanting in his own. Thousands of people living in a state without labouring, must necessarily exhaust it; but on the contrary, in a nation where the poor find employment, riches are diffus'd among the whole people. The Czar us'd to say, he should soon be the richest prince

prince in Europe, because he thought he should employ all his subjects. We have seen him, greater by a voluntary humiliation, than upon the throne itself, from which he lov'd to descend; apply himself to several trades, to set them an example of labour. He sent many young lads into England and Holland, to learn naval architecture, to make woollen cloths, watches, &c. and being convinc'd that arts, could not be brought to perfection without the sciences; he invited men of learning from all parts of Europe, to found his academy at Petersburg. I find him continually employ'd in promoting the welfare of his nation; and omitting nothing that could contribute to enrich it, civilise it, and make it happier: in the reformer of this potent empire, I see the founder and father of a new people. The same CHARLES XIIth acquired in Europe, cost Sweden dear; but the Czar PETER was a hero of a very superior rank: generations unborn will bless his memory. He deserv'd the name of Great, by the consent of all Europe; and will preserve it with the approbation of all posterity.

In a political system, as well as in that of the universe, all the different parts have a mutual connexion. Commerce, arms and learning, though of different natures; are mutually related to each other: which men of geniusses form'd for government, can't avoid perceiving. The English, who examine into the bottom of all things, look'd upon the establishment

establishment of the French academy, which at first appear'd so suspicious to some of them and indifferent to others; as a peice of cardinal Richelieu's policy. There are ways of contributing towards the aggrandisement of monarchies, which are not the less sure for being imperceptible: while commerce on one hand, ascertains the conquests of a state, by the riches it brings into it: learning on the other, by polishing manners, and rendering a nation more humane and flourishing, makes its government lik'd. 'Tis easy to keep a people in obedience, when the new yoke put on them, is lighter than that they wore before.

Before France thought of aggrandising herself by commerce, she made new conquests, without enlarging her power. Though she had men, yet as more money went out of the kingdom, by the extraordinary expences of war, than could return into it; after she had rais'd great armies, she gain'd but little ground, and soon lost the little she had gain'd. The Spaniards and English gave her laws. Commerce, is one of the sources of the flourishing condition she is since arriv'd at, and to which the TURENNES, RICHELIEUS and COLBERTS, equally contributed. The last has the glory of forming our marine. LEWIS XIV, tho' at war with all Europe, was still powerful enough to dispute the empire of the sea, with the united force of England and Holland.

Commerce is as necessary to defray the expence of war, as to preserve plenty in time of peace. 'Tis with money we take towns, gain allies, and hire auxiliary troupes. 'Tis the riches of England have rais'd France such powerful enemies. What long and bloody wars has the republick of Venice maintain'd against the powerful Turkish empire! And who knows better than you, how your own was enabled at this time, to subdue the rebels of Corsica!

Consumption, which is the support of agriculture, becomes more considerable in cities, proportionably as commerce flourishes; and the more plentiful the necessaries of life are in them, the more the number of their inhabitants increases. But it were to be wish'd none were permitted to settle in them, but such as one way or other contributed to the publick benefit; and that cities were not an asylum for idle people. They ought particularly to banish out of them, the prodigious number of lazy footmen, that are maintain'd by the pride of the nobility, and rich people who imitate them; to the prejudice of manufactures and the cultivation of the earth. The luxury that maintains a great number of useless men by the labour of others, is as truly prejudicial to any state whatever; as that which finds employment for workmen, is advantageous. This abuse is carried to such an excess among us at present, that it deserves the whole attention of government.

In

In the age we now live in, Europe is too enlighten'd not to consider commerce, as the most essential part of politicks, which have indeed intirely chang'd their face, since all the civiliz'd nations in Europe, have apply'd themselves more or less to trade. Nobody knows better than yourself, how difficult 'tis in this respect, to reconcile the interests of the different princes. When the English appear'd so allarm'd for the liberties of Europe, they were in reality only attentive to their particular interest. 'Twas only on account of their commerce, that a prince of the blood royal of France on the throne of Spain, gave them umbrage; and we ought always to think it, the only motive that induces them to make war, and the sole object they aim at, in a peace.

In all sorts of states, liberty is the foundation of commerce; which has been sometimes ruined, when they design'd to protect it. The industry of merchants often goes farther, than the prudence of those who will direct them. The wise practice of republican governments, ought to be a rule to others, in this respect. Monopolies should never be granted, except in cases of absolute necessity; 'tis never proper to prejudice particular persons, unless for the general good.

Riches, which are the fruits of commerce, are perhaps not enough to give it all the encouragement it wants; especially in a nation like ours, that piques itself on a certain sensibility of glory, which is peculiar to it. In
France,

France, we have not a due regard for merchants; most people confound them with tradesmen who sell by retail: from whence it comes to pass, that the son prefers the exercise of an office that ruins him, to commerce which enrich'd his father. This occasions a great loss to the society; for the larger fortunes we employ in trade, the more beneficial we are enabled to make it, to ourselves and our country; the riches of which we increase, by augmenting our own.

Our neighbours, wiser in this respect, honour an order of men, that contribute to the support of all the others. Merchandize in England, is an honourable profession, because that of a useful member of the society; and is not incompatible with the quality of member of parliament; that is to say, legislator. And what greater glory can private men arrive at, than that of watching over the happiness of their fellow-subjects, in this quality!

If they will make commerce flourish in France, they must annex honours to it; and is it not as requisite in justice, as in policy? We may be useful to our country in more ways than one; rich merchants contribute, at all times to the advantage, and often to the preservation of it. One of their bills of exchange instantly makes a famine in their country cease, or delivers it from the invasion of an enemy.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXIV.

To the President MONTESQUIEU.

*That the writings of the antiministerial party
tend rather to independancy, than any form
of government whatever.*

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

TIS impossible the advantages and defects of the English government, can have escap'd the observations of him, who has so plainly pointed out the causes of the greatness and fall of the Roman republic; no author has more clearly shewn the influence morality has on politics; and indeed, the abuses that creep into any part whatever of the execution of the laws, are the seeds of those very disorders, which have so often occasion'd revolutions in empires. How many governments in Europe, have only preserv'd the external form of their first institution! People either do not, or will not perceive these alterations; whole nations are so govern'd by opinion, that some boast of enjoying advantages, they have not; and others often possess them without knowing it.

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We can't cast our eyes on the political writings, that are daily printed here against the ministry ; without being surpris'd at a sort of contradiction, which these authors, who value themselves on reasoning justly, are guilty of. On the one hand, they praise the constitution of their government excessively ; on the other, they complain bitterly of the continual violation of their laws and privileges : which is, in my opinion, either boasting of a government, that exists only in their ideas ; or deploring imaginary misfortunes. We may suspect them of acting insincerely, in one of these respects, which makes a party-writer, only a railer.

An English author speaking of the continual complaints that are made in the two houses, of the court's disposing of the majority of votes, in both of them ; compares the parliament to the two *Sofias*, one of which complains of the blows, which he owns he gave himself.

'Tis easily perceiv'd by the republican spirit so visible in all these writings ; that they often aim as much at the king, as the minister, in whose hands his authority is deposited. As they use their utmost endeavours in them, to paint the inconveniencies monarchies may be subject to, in the most odious colours ; so they palliate as artfully as possible, those that are inseparable from republics ; which perhaps are equally great.

Nothing is more easy, than to represent a republican government, in a proper light, to impose on mankind. It promises liberty and plenty; and sometimes proclaims even an equality of conditions; a certain way to charm the populace. But a wise man does not judge by appearances only; he considers equality of conditions, as absolutely contrary to the welfare of a nation: and is convinc'd that an equality in riches, is absolutely impossible. Noblemen and beggars, those who live in plenty, and those who gain their livelihoods by the sweat of their brows; are all in ranks, that contribute to the general good. An equality, which all men aspire to, is a state of perpetual warfare. There must be strong and weak; and perhaps evils as well as benefits; the harmony of the whole results from these particular dissonances.

People pay a greater regard to names, than things; they believe they enjoy liberty, because they have the *word* for their devise: those who find themselves invested with power, by feeding them with chimerical ideas, find means to really enslave them. While CROMWELL was extolling *the majesty of the people of England*, he actually held the nation in chains. But you, sir, who are deceiv'd by nothing; know we can be free under a king, or slaves in a republic.

Great encomiums are bestowed on the political Constitution of the Athenians; but if we reflect on the factions which troubled that

republic, where the most eminent and most virtuous men were often persecuted, banish'd or punish'd with death, at the pleasure of an orator, carry'd away more by passion, than zeal for the public welfare: we are tempted to believe that people, who piqu'd themselves so much on liberty, were in reallity slaves to a small number of factious persons, who made themselves formidable to all the rest.

While MILTON, whose pen was hir'd by CROMWELL, endeavour'd to inspire the English with a hatred for kings, and love for republican government; HOBBS, one of the greatest philosophers in England, translated THUCYDIDES, to destroy the false ideas, fanaticism began to spread in the nation. The history of the Macedonians, who were subject to kings; presents us with fewer examples of the abuse of power; than that of the Athenians, who were govern'd by a senate.

Whether a people are reduc'd to slavery, by one or many hands; slavery is always the same: and perhaps less dangerous to them, when impos'd by the ambition of a single man; than by the collusion of a whole body. People are more allarm'd at the unjust enterprises of a prince, than at the more specious attempts of those, in whose hands they deposite their liberty; especially when the latter have the art to cover their designs, with the veil of the public interest, as they always do, whenever they aim at their own private one.

If the king, in a monarchical state, gives to his favourites ; the leaders, in a republican one, give to their partisans. But in the latter, all those who have no share in the government ; are more oppress'd than they, who live under an absolute prince. I could easily give instances of it. This at least will be granted, that there is no country where the people are greater slaves, than in the republic of Poland. All the christian monarchies are limited by law ; but when the executive power is in the hands of those, who are only great by oppressing the people ; who can they have recourse to ? They must bear it without remedy, because they are oppress'd by the very people, who represent them.

There are, you know, more republics than one, where the body of the people, is indeed, free ; but where every particular person is, as I may say, a slave, by the form of government he has submitted to. Nothing but a mistaken fanaticism, can maintain that a state enjoys liberty ; when that of all the members which compose it, is sacrific'd to it. Is not this one of those cases, where men prefer an imaginary glory, to their true interest ; and the name of liberty, to the advantages which alone should make it desirable ?

In many republican states, a freeman means no more, than one who is not subject to a king. Have we not some of them at our doors, where the care of liberty, makes every particular person wear the heaviest chains ? If

our religious houses are a sort of little republics, that choose their governors; small republics, are only large communities, in which the severity of the rule, is a yoke to all those who compose them. What citizen of London is there; who would purchase liberty at this price; and submit to the uneasy life, of a burgher of Basil or Geneva! In vain does the magistrate in England endeavour to reform abuses; they defy his authority, because he has not power enough to make himself obey'd. In a country where the laws are not respected; they have not so much love for liberty, as desire for Independance. And indeed, the maxims of most of those who write against the ministry, tend more to anarchy, than any form of government whatever.

Independent of these Inconveniencies which concern only particular persons, there are many others which regard the whole body of a republic. The length of their deliberations, in circumstances that require speedy action, is a very great one. 'Tis the lot of the republican states, to live in continual allarms; their neighbours cant stir without giving them umbrage: and if they have any ambitious ones, their enemies have had time to act, before they have had to deliberate. This is what oblig'd the republic of Rome, in great dangers to create a *Dictator*. What was the consequence? Those it intrusted with an absolute power, at last made use of it to enslave it. Can those who shall venture, in the same

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conjunctures, to run the same hazard, hope to prevent what the Romans could not hinder?

However that may be, let us leave the vulgar to feed themselves with imaginary happiness and glory. The man who is free from prejudice, will perhaps rather choose to live in a monarchy, which is undisturb'd, and obey one man, than be enslav'd by those who were born his equals.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXV.

To the Abbé DE ROTHÉLIN.

Of Academies. Use of the French for perfecting the language, and the want of such a society in England. Court and college education.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

WHilst literature was confined to colleges, the professors of it lived to no purpose with regard to society: like Egyptian priests, they never explained themselves but in a language which themselves only could understand. Servilely attach'd to their prejudices, they were less employed in the search of truth, than in maintaining the errors es-

poused by their party. But no sooner did philosophy quit the language of the schools, no sooner did the muses venture to speak in the living tongues, than the men of polite taste, who knew the world while they cultivated the sciences and the arts, adorned the former with that spirit of freedom, and the latter with that elegant taste which is natural to them. MONTAGNE opened new ways in the pursuit of wisdom, and, to invite others to follow him, strew'd the paths he had struck out with flowers. He banished the dryness of logick from the use of reason. MALHERBE communicated to our muses a more decent and more noble tone, and polish'd off the roughness which till his time had disfigured our poesy: our tongue, when smoothened by him, became in time a learned language thro' the cares of the French Academy, to which alone it owes the beauty and perfection it now appears in.

Our neighbours are forced to acknowledge this. The celebrated DRYDEN, prejudiced as he was in favour of his own nation, perceived that the English would never become a polite and regular tongue, without the help of an Academy employed only to refine and settle it. Mr. LOCKE proposed likewise to his countrymen the example of the French. *The policy of the French, says he, did not think it unworthy of the public to encourage and reward those that apply themselves to perfect their*
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*language.** Doctor SWIFT complained that an establishment so glorious for learning was wanting in England. In the reign of queen ANNE, when lord OXFORD was minister, that learned man did all in his power to procure for his nation an English Academy, formed upon the model of yours. There is a letter of his upon this subject*, which proves both the utility of the French Academy among ourselves, and the high reputation it bears in foreign countries.

Doctor SWIFT was very sensible of the necessity of admitting men of quality into a society, which was intended to be made honourable for men of learning, and to which the care of perfecting the language, and purifying the taste in England was to be entrusted. In fact, the Dorsets and the Rochesters, and among us the N * * * and the S * * *, whoever, in a word, are so happy as to honour the muses by cultivating their acquaintance, are those to whom the muses delight to shew themselves the most favourable.

I leave you, sir, to judge of this matter: you, who brought both these titles to the French Academy, and who join to the advantages of birth the most precious gifts of the mind, ought to be more sensible than any man of the benefits that result to learning from

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this

* Our author does not always refer to the place in his quotations of English writers. When he does, we shall endeavour to have recourse to the original.

* Printed in his works.

this association. If writers by profession are the best judges of the language that is written, persons of quality can best decide upon the language that is spoken. The former have searched deeper into the rules of grammar, and the etymology of words ; the latter are the most sure witnesses of what is in use with the polite world. There must be a concurrence of both these, in order to bring a language to perfection. The court is the center of taste and politeness, and our writers can never imbibe either the one or the other but by conversation with those who live in it. The comedies of TERENCE favour of his familiarity with SCIPIO.

But independent of this real benefit, it is necessary for persons of quality to be members of the French Academy, in order to keep alive the desire of men of learning to be associated in the same body. Those who aspire to this honour cannot be suspected of self-interested views: the Academy promises no pension, and has nothing to bestow but glory. The talents of the mind render all men equal in that society, which however exhibits something flattering to self-love, the first mover of all our actions, by shewing that he who is highest by birth, or most distinguish'd by his rank, thinks so honourably of the man of letters as to make interest for a seat with him. The general of armies, his brow bound with the laurels of victory, believes himself more illustrious when the muse's wreath, bestow'd
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by you, is added to them. Thus in turn, he honours the man of letters with whom he condescends to take a place, and is himself honoured by the place he holds in your society.

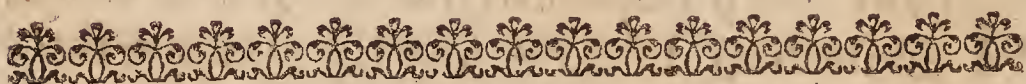
The protectors of other literary societies are only fellows of the French Academy. You, sir, who in the Academy of Belles-lettres do on all accounts so worthily fill the place of honorary member, have you not publicly testified how much you think yourself honoured by your seat in the French Academy? It is this equality that has hitherto made the same honour sought by all the greatest men in the different parts of literature. All those distinguish'd minds have been willing to join a society, in which the heroes who have defended the state, and the venerable prelates who have been the glory of the Gallican church have wished to be admitted: next to the names of our Corneilles and Racines, you have the satisfaction to see those of our Villars and Bossuets.

What a spur must the hope of becoming a member of so illustrious a body, be to every man who feels in himself something of a genius! All men are not guided by interest: those who make their court to the muses, usually seek nothing but glory. And what efforts will not a learned man make to deserve a place in an Academy, wherein he becomes a brother to those who fill the highest places in the state, and the first dignities of the

Whatever those may say of it who despair of ever obtaining a place there, the French Academy is as glorious to the nation, as it is useful to literature. The highest point of honour that we, who cultivate letters, can arise to, is to become one of the members of this society.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXVI.

To the Chevalier DE B * *.

Of the English prize-fighters. Stories of FIGG, sir THOMAS PARKINS, &c. Boxing, riding, running, as practised in England, with reflections.

LONDON, &c.

S I R,

IT was to the accident of casting my eyes to-day upon the public papers that you owe the letter I now write you. These papers, properly speaking, are the registers of the manners of the nation: very singular things are often found in them, and the article I now communicate appear'd to me one of that
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number. It contains the defiances of two heroes of a species unknown among us, and who perhaps are more regarded here than they ought to be.

The CHALLENGE.

“ Whereas I GEORGE BISHOP, of Shaftsbury in the county of Dorset, master of the noble science of defence in all its branches, have been highly affronted hereby by mr. MACGUIRE with respect to the use of the sword, I invite him to fight me the weapon thro’ upon the stage. I desire no favour, and wait with impatience to meet him.

“ Your servant, GEORGE BISHOP.”

The ANSWER.

“ I, FELIX MACGUIRE, of the kingdom of Ireland, master of my sword, having fought with the most illustrious men of this kingdom, to wit, mr. FIGG, mr. SPARKS, mr. SUTTON, mr. JOHNSON, mr. GILL, and other great men, will not fail to meet mr. BISHOP at the time and place that shall be appointed, and will endeavour to maintain against him the honour due to my sword and my country. And I warn him to take special care that I do not make him limp off with a pair of crutches, as I have already done by several of his countrymen.

“ Your servant, FELIX MACGUIRE.”

What do you think, sir, of the hectoring language of these miserable gladiators? If they are couragious men, what pity that their courage is so ill employed! Does not the taste of the English for spectacles of this kind astonish you?

How great soever may be the fame of these champions, I believe you will pardom me if I am not so curious to be myself a witness of their high feats of arms. The English reproach us for our antipathy to these barbarous combats, as if it was an effect of our effeminacy: have we not as much ground to interpret the delight they take in them to their disadvantage? Ought humanity to bear the sight of wretches who knock one another on the head with staves, or cut one another to pieces with swords? Without accusing the people who make it their amusement to be cruel, let us not blush to shun even the image of such cruelty.

It is very difficult to avoid being inspired with something of ferocity at these spectacles. After they had familiarised themselves at Rome to see lions and tygers tear each other to pieces, combats of that sort grew insipid to the people, and it was found necessary to make those savages fight with men, in order to give new satisfaction. The Romans diverted themselves with what we call at this day barbarity. They lov'd to see the spilling of blood, and contemplated with pleasure, in an expiring gladiator, the horrible spectacle of the pains and agonies of

of death. They had masters, or rather monsters of ferocity, who taught those unhappy wretches how to merit the applauses of the public, either by suffering with constancy, or dying with a good grace. But what does this example prove, except that the Romans had not so much politeness as they piqued themselves upon having, and that they were more cruel than they imagined themselves to be? After all, Greek or Roman, what is their example to us? Let us not suffer ourselves to be imposed upon by the authority of nations, but acknowledge only the laws of reason. Such fights are unworthy of reasonable beings, and can only be a shame to humanity: wise men always abhor'd them. *If he that suffers is culpable, says SENECA, he has no more than he deserves: but what have you done, that you should deserve to see him suffer?*

It must be owned that these battles of the English gladiators are not so much in fashion as they have been: people of distinction have almost left frequenting them, and scarce any body is seen at these matches but the lowest of the populace, or that class of men who are perhaps more despicable than the dregs of the people, because they imitate them as much in their manners, as they are exalted above them by their birth.

I must not conceal from you, however, that some persons of the first rank here have such an esteem for this noble exercise, that they learn it themselves, and a few there are who
look

look upon the science of defence as the chief merit of an accomplish'd gentleman. I know one, mr. * *, the brother of lord * *, who served an apprenticeship under the famous mr. FIGG, whom I mentioned above. This English nobleman considers it as such an honour to have been educated under so great a master, that he often treats him at his table. The persons invited are promised what entertainment they shall have, as we promise at Paris a dish of pheasants or venison. You must not think this strange, because every country has its customs: in France the people sing to amuse themselves, and here they pass their time in boxing.

Mr. FIGG said one day to a gentleman of my acquaintance, who had the happiness to be at one of these suppers, *Sir, no man has more compassion than I for the poor and miserable: but when once I am upon the stage, if I see flesh, I must cut away.* Such is the table discourse with which this celebrated man entertains those who admire his talents, and it must certainly make the treat very agreeable.

With regard to boxing, the nobility in England do not excel in it less than the common people. One of the peers of the kingdom is at this day the terror of all the hackney coachmen in London. I knew in the country a baronet, who resides there, and who, tho' he is very antient, piques himself still upon being the first wrestler in Great-Britain. Some years ago he published a book upon the useful-

fulness of the art in which he so much excels, and not having been so happy as to have such eminent disciples as he could have wished, out zeal for the public good, as well as for his own diversion, he now teaches it gratis to those who will attend his lectures. A lord who lives in his neighbourhood went one day to pay him a visit, and as they were walking together, and discoursing of this marvellous art, with the advantages that may be drawn from it to society, the old baronet catches his man hold behind, and throws him upon his head. His lordship, a little discomposed by the blow, got up in a rage : but our artful wrestler, in a grave and important tone, interrupted him. *My lord, says he, you may take this for a proof that I have a great friendship for you : you are the only man to whom I ever shew'd that lock.*

As we should always view things on the most favourable side, I imagine the English are less pleased with these combats in themselves, than with the exercise they take in them ; and in fact, exercises of all kinds are here very much followed. Consider mankind thro', how many are there who exercise their bodies, how few their understandings !

One may reckon the riding in a coach one of the most violent exercises that are here in use. There are none of these machines but what might very well answer the purpose of the Abbé DE ST. PIERRE'S *jolting engine*, * and those

* Trémoussoir.

those who use them on account of their health, prefer those that jolt the most roughly. They have other exercises for different distempers, to which the persons afflicted, or that think themselves in danger of being so, apply very closely. For the gravel they play at bowls, and for the head-ach they trot on horse-back.

But as the most wholesome nourishment becomes a kind of poison when used immoderately, so exercise, necessary as it is to health, may be very pernicious to those who abuse it. A great many English place their glory in supporting such fatigues, as create the misfortune of those who are obliged to bear them by their professions. I have known a young man of quality who boasted he could run farther, and hold it longer, than any running footman in England. He had won several considerable wagers by this occupation; and, if I was told the truth, he run one day from London to York without stopping. In imitation of those who put in for the prize of swiftness in the olympic games, and who were obliged to live soberly, abstaining from all ragouts, to make them qualified candidates; this English nobleman, when he has a race to run, prepares himself by a regular diet, bleeding, purging, and sweating himself violently, in order to make his body the lighter. Thus, at the expence of his own health, which he has visibly impair'd, he has purchased the reputation of being the best runner in England. In what class shall we rank the
man

man who pays so dear for so frivolous a merit? Shall we call him singular, or senseless? In a head badly organised what may not be produced by the vain ambition of making a man's self taken notice of by others!

Like as formerly at Olympus and Lacedæmon, in more than one county of England young damsels are to be seen contending for the prize at a course. They are commonly strong robust country girls, who run with surprising swiftness.

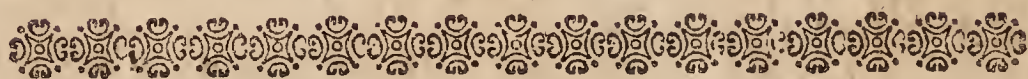
Perhaps this taste which the English discover for all sorts of exercise, is a proof that exercise is necessary for them. Those of our pleasures which seem at first sight to be arbitrary, had often their rise from real necessities. Who knows but the quality of the air that is breathed in England, and the aliments on which the people live, may create more occasion here than in other countries for whatever will promote perspiration? These different exercises are most certain receipts against the *spleen*, and I believe contribute, generally speaking, to make the English more robust than the French. The more use men make of their strength, the stronger they are in proportion.

The Romans, who in the beginning of their state addicted themselves to bodily exercises to render themselves more war-like, continued to use them afterwards for their health: it was for this that AUGUSTUS play'd so often at foot-ball. But I cannot understand how men can give themselves up to such exercises

ercises as degrade the dignity of our nature. How can beings who have any sentiment of humanity, make a diversion of seeing the engagements of these fencers, which puts them upon a level with the brutes whose fierceness they imitate.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



L E T T E R LXVII;

TO M. FRERET;

Of the English and French authors, their distinguishing characteristics. Multitude of books printed in England: few good. The English translate all that is published in French. A curious fragment taken from a very indifferent book concerning the insects of the river Hypanis.

LONDON, &c.

S I R,

I Have received all the literary news that appeared at the beginning of this year, and which you had the goodness to send me. To begin to discharge this debt, I have got lord WALDEGRAVE's courier to bring you five or
fix

six political papers; and you will very soon receive, by the hands of mr. SMITH of Boulogne, a more considerable packet. This return will contain all that has appeared here, tolerably worth reading, in the several kinds of literature.

How barren are we Frenchmen, in comparison of the English! There are more works printed in this country in one month, than the press at Paris furnishes in a whole year. The very last year produced almost fifteen hundred, not including the news-papers and political journals that appear periodically, and which serve to employ a people whose leisure is more burthenfome to them than we commonly see it among us: for the English do not live and converse so much with one another as the French: wherefore to fill up the vacuities of their lives, they are obliged either to read or do nothing. This is indeed much the same with regard to the greatest part of their numerous writers. They are naturally inclin'd to silence, as we are to exhaust ourselves in discourse: and silence inspires a taste for reading, as much as talkativeness is averse to it. Perhaps even a great many persons, who in this country write books, would never have attempted any such employment if they had had spirits enough to do any thing else.

We ourselves have in France but too many authors of this species, who compose romances and histories because they are not able to fol-

follow any other trade. At Paris the minds of young men are debauched at the theatre: scarce have they frequented the pit six months, but they are willing, in their turns, to appear on the stage in the form of authors. The Italian comedy, * under which name, we might say, such a number of wretched pieces are perform'd, were they not so often applauded by the spectators, occasions a great many clerks to neglect the business of the attornies their masters, and take up thro' indolence a profession which is indeed more flattering to self-love, but which does not require greater talents than that which they abandon. For it is not true, according to the common opinion, that there must be understanding to write even a bad book : it is sufficient for a man to believe he has a genius, and there is no error of self-love more frequent than this.

There are also many authors, who, like our antient BELLEFORET, write for no other reason but because they have families to maintain. *They have mills, like him, in which they with great facility turn out new books ; that is to say, collections and idle stories, which they copy one after another.*

In England, in France, and above all in Holland, how many writers are there in book-sellers pay, who, as heretofore DU RYER, work for about * three and four pence per sheet?

* A low sort of farce or drolling, of which we had a specimen when the French company was in London.

* *Quarante sols.*

sheet! 'Tis a pity that a great part of them have neither learning nor genius enough to apply themselves only to translations. The booksellers, to whom they sell their labour, would employ them more advantageously both for the public and themselves. *There ought to be, says MONTAGNE, some legal corrections against trifling and useless writers, as there are against vagabonds and sluggards.* In many authors the itch of writing is a kind of madness, which nothing can ever restrain *.

D'ABLANCOURT had reason to say, it is better to translate good books than to make new ones, in which there seldom is any new instruction. It was a remark of BAYLE, that nobody had yet thought of writing the history of great criminals: but worse has been done in our days by publishing the *celebrated causes* ||, which are in fact only the annals of the gallows, or the history of scoundrels. Such works as these are a shame to humanity, and may be of pernicious use in society. Perhaps the stories will instruct men of bad inclinations in the practice of wickedness, more than the reflections of the author will deter them from it.

We are not to judge of the superiority of one nation over another, in respect of the sciences,
Vol. II. L

* *Quatuor millia librorum Didymus Grammaticus scripsit; miser erat si tam multa super vacua legisset.*

|| A French book, some parts of which have been translated into English. Our author, I suppose, had not observed the many histories of malefactors we have in England.

ences, by the multitude of books that appear in it annually. The taste, the solidity, the usefulness of those works are the standard. Notwithstanding this great fertility of English writers, good books are not more common here than elsewhere. There would certainly be a great many fewer things printed, if those who write were obliged only to know their own language: for it would be too much to desire of them order and correction in their works. The English tongue, you know, has few establish'd principles; and you will agree with me that the greatest part of those who write it, regard no principle at all.

What very much augments the number of the bad books that appear here, it must be confessed are the translations that are made from our writers. They translate at London every thing that appears new at Paris, the worst as well as the best, without any distinction. For this reason those of our authors who have had that honour done them, have no room to be proud on the occasion. **, which is known only by the copies which the author gave away, has just now made its appearance in English. The new history of Portugal, bad as it is, would infallibly have been translated, if it could but have crossed the sea. Such sort of foreign productions, joined with those of the same kind which their own climate produces in great number, overflow the English literature with a deluge of barbarism and bad taste.

But

But the chief thing I would reproach the English writers with, is their not knowing how to *make a book*. Their best works are most commonly destitute of method. Within forty years past, more has been written upon physick in England, than in all Europe besides: yet nothing has been produced that in this respect can be compared with dr. ASTRUC's treatise *de Morbis Venereis*. The good judges here, who have a taste for art and method, look upon that work as the most useful and best composed piece that has for a long time appeared in medicine. But let the subject be what it will, 'tis very rare in France, as well as in England, to find both kinds of merit united. Many of our writers have the fault directly opposite to that of the English: they often range a number of nothings with all possible art and method. 'Tis a great pity indeed, that such authors have nothing to give us, because, if they had but matter, they would know how to put it together. From these different characters, our phrase, when we praise a work, is at present; *'Tis a well made book, a well writ piece, a very methodical discourse*: Whereas the English say, on the contrary, *It is a book full of good, or excellent things*.

You cannot help, sir, having observed a very essential difference between their authors and ours. The English, who treat of the abstract sciences, are not solicitous enough to express themselves clearly: they seem always afraid of saying too much, and are as sparing

of words as they are prodigal of ideas. Such is the character of the celebrated BACON. Four lines of NEWTON's mathematical principles will publish the ablest geometrician. LOCKE is, * perhaps, the only English author who knew how to avoid this fault. Those, on the contrary, who write upon subjects of taste and entertainment, run too much into diffuseness and redundancy: they are always afraid they do not shew wit enough, and continue to crowd figures upon figures. Every moment they fly from their subject, that they may not omit the least trifles which have any relation to it; so that the principal idea is often clouded by the multitude of ideas that are accessory.

The French authors are still more subject to this fault so opposite to the English philosophical writers, and have more than once been reproached for extending into a large volume, a subject that needed not have taken up more than a dissertation of twenty pages. An author who has too much distrust of the penetration of his readers, gives no great idea of his own: unhappily for such a man, while he takes a great deal of pains to make himself understood, his readers understand him but too well.

With respect to the manner of treating subjects of taste and pure entertainment, you are in the right to maintain, that neither the English nor any other nation can come in competition with the

* Mr. LOCKE complains that the mother tongue is too much neglected in England. *They (the English) are so far, says he, from learning the rules of it, that they do not even know there is such a thing as English Grammar.*

the French. mr. CONGREVE, mr. ADDISON, the earl of Shaftsbury, dr. SWIFT, and mr. POPE had never distinguished themselves so much from the other writers of their country, if they had not carefully studied our good authors of the last age, as well as the great models of antiquity.

The great quantity of books that are printed here every month upon all sorts of subjects, discovers to us the genius of this nation. In literary productions, each author follows his own taste; perhaps, I might as well have said his whimsy, as the only rule of what he does. A man will attempt to write here, who probably learned his language only of a basket-woman. A cobbler, who has got the secret of an old woman's remedy, will give you a treatise in physick. Nothing is so easy as to make books, when a person dispenses with all those cares that are necessary to form a style, and give order and correction to the whole.

For my part, I am far from condemning this abundance of books, since the worst cannot but be of some benefit to the nation. They afford a livelihood to a great many workmen in London; and in the country they support many manufacturies of paper, and consequently promote commerce. A great number of writers may thus, in fact, be useful to the state in any country whatsoever, provided there be labouring men enough without them: for otherwise, no profession should

be tolerated when the same persons could be better employ'd in the culture of the lands.

We should always think, likewise, that a book which to us appears contemptible, may not be so to men of another class. How many are there who are amused with *Peter of Provence*, and *John of Paris*? * There must be books for the city, and others for the country. The reputation that * * * bears in the provinces is indisputable at Paris. And after all, it is agreed that there are few bad books in which there is not something good. I lately myself found in an English book, that neither is nor deserves to be much known, a fragment that seem'd to me agreeable. I send it you in French, that you may communicate it to your friends. Thus is the most precious metal often found intermixed with the most vile materials, and he who separates them is doing a task equally useful to himself and others.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.

Upon the vanity and ambition of the human mind. †

“ C I C E R O, in the first book of his *Tusculans*, shews ingeniously the falsity

* Authors of a class with *Guy of Warwick*, and *Robin Hood*.

† As our author gives us no hint by which to find out this obscure English author, we are oblig'd to translate the passage back again.

“ sity of the judgments we form concerning
 “ the duration of the human life compared
 “ with eternity. To give the more force to
 “ his reasoning, he quotes a passage from
 “ the *Natural History of Aristotle* touching
 “ a kind of insects, that are common upon
 “ the banks of the Hypanis *, who never
 “ live beyond the day in which they are
 “ produced.

“ To pursue the idea of this elegant wri-
 “ ter, let us suppose that one of the most
 “ robust of these Hypanians (so they are
 “ call'd in history) was according to his
 “ own notions as antient as time itself; that
 “ he had begun to exist at break of day,
 “ and by the extraordinary force of his con-
 “ stitution, had been able to support the fa-
 “ tigues of an active life thro' the number
 “ of seconds in ten or twelve hours. Du-
 “ ring such a long course of instants, by
 “ experience, and his reflexions on all he
 “ had seen, he must have acquir'd very
 “ sublime wisdom. He looks upon his fel-
 “ low-creatures who died about noon as
 “ happily deliver'd from the great number
 L 4 “ of

* A river of Scythia, at present call'd *the Bog*. Aristotle says, that there are small animals upon the river Hypanis, which live but a day. He that dies at eight in the morning, dies in his youth; he that dies at five in the evening, dies in decrepid old age. Who among us does not laugh to see the happiness or misery of this moment of existence brought into consideration? The shortest and longest life among us, if we compare it with eternity, or only with the duration of mountains, stars, trees, or even of some animals, is not less ridiculous. *Montaigne's Essays*.

“ of inconveniencies to which old-age is
“ subject. He has astonishing traditions to
“ relate to his grand-children, concerning
“ facts that were prior to all the memo-
“ rials of their nation. The young swarm,
“ composed of beings who may have al-
“ ready liv'd a full hour, approach with
“ respect this venerable fire, and hear his
“ instructive discourses with admiration. E-
“ very thing that he relates to them will
“ appear a prodigy to that generation, whose
“ life is so very short: the space of a day
“ will seem the greatest duration of time,
“ and day-break, in their chronology, will be
“ call'd the great æra of the creation.

“ Let us now suppose this venerable in-
“ sect, this Nestor of the Hypanis, a little
“ before his death, and about the hour of
“ sun-set, assembling all his descendants,
“ friends, and acquaintance, to impart to
“ them dying his last thoughts, and give
“ them his final advice. They repair from
“ all parts under the vast shelter of a mush-
“ room, and the departing sage addresses
“ himself to them in the following man-
“ ner.

“ Friends and countrymen, I perceive
“ that the longest life must have an end.
“ The term of mine is arriv'd, and I do not
“ regret my fate, since my age was become
“ a burthen to me, and to me there was no
“ longer any thing new under the sun. The

“ revo-

“ revolutions and calamities that have deso-
“ lated my country, the great number of
“ particular accidents to which we are all
“ subject, the infirmities that afflict our
“ race, and the misfortunes that have hap-
“ pened to me in my own family; all that
“ I have seen in the course of a long life,
“ has but too well taught me this grand
“ truth; that no happiness, plac’d on things
“ which do not depend on us, can be secure
“ or durable. The uncertainty of life is
“ great. One whole generation perished by
“ a sharp wind. A multitude of our heed-
“ less youth were swept off into the waters
“ by an unexpected fresh gale. What ter-
“ rible deluges have I seen happen by a
“ sudden shower! Our most solid coverings
“ are not proof against a storm of hail. A
“ dark cloud makes the most courageous
“ hearts to tremble. I liv’d in the first
“ ages, and conversed with insects of a tal-
“ ler stature, a stronger constitution, and I
“ may add, of more profound wisdom, than
“ any of those in the present generation. I
“ beseech you to give credit to my last
“ words, when I assure you, that the same
“ sun, which now appears beyond the wa-
“ ter; and seems to be not far distant from
“ the earth; that very sun I have formerly seen
“ in the middle of the heavens, casting down
“ his rays directly upon us. The earth was
“ much more enlighten’d in those past ages,
“ the air much warmer, and your ancestors
“ were

“ were much more sober and more virtuous.
“ Tho’ my senses are impaired, my memo-
“ ry is not, and I can assure you that glori-
“ ous being has motion. I saw his first ri-
“ sing over the summit of that mountain,
“ and I began my life about the same time
“ that he began his immense career. For a
“ great many ages he advanc’d along the hea-
“ vens with a prodigious heat, and a bright-
“ ness of which you can have no idea, a
“ brightness that would certainly have been
“ to you insupportable. But now, by his
“ decline, and a sensible diminution of his
“ vigour, I foresee that all nature will soon
“ be at an end, and that the world will be
“ buried in darkness in less than an hundred
“ minutes.

“ Alas ! my friends, how did I formerly
“ flatter myself with the deceitful hope of
“ living for-ever upon this earth ! How
“ magnificent were the cells which I dug for
“ my habitation ! What confidence did I
“ not put in the firmness of my members,
“ the springs of my joints, and the strength
“ of my wings ! But I have lived long e-
“ nough for nature and for glory : none of
“ of those, whom I leave behind me, will
“ have the same satisfaction in this age of
“ darkness and decay, which I see is already
“ begun.”



LETTER LXVIII.

To the President BOUHIER;

Upon the English liberty; the House of Commons; Elections, &c. A pleasant anecdote concerning the Leicester election.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

HAppy those who like you can converse with Plato! That sound philosophy, which judges of all things, and wonders at nothing, is to be acquired in the conversation of those great men of antiquity. He that enjoys it familiarly looks upon the want of reason and justice but as the necessary consequences of that weakness which is almost inseparable from our nature. He is not surpriz'd either to see particular men, communities, or even whole nations, pursuing a certain point, without taking the way that leads to it, or to observe prevailing humanity rendering fruitless the precautions of the most sage policy.

It was in the reigns of Henry VII, and Henry VIII, that the House of Commons got into possession of the authority it is now invested with, and which was before exercised by the house of peers. The members of the
first

first are the great commissioners of the kingdom, deputed from all parts to present the grievances of the nation to the king and the lords, to demand the reformation of abuses, and, if it be necessary, the punishment of those who are the authors of them.

What liberty England has preserved, is indisputably due to the House of Commons: but perhaps this house hath shewn more courage in tempestuous times, than vigilance during those apparent calms which are not unattended with danger. Without reproaching the modern English with degeneracy from the virtue of their ancestors, it is certain, that if they have still the same principles, they do not hold the same conduct; if they are equally jealous of their privileges, they are not equally attentive in the choice of those to whom they entrust the care of defending them.

The point of most importance to this nation, is the election of the members to serve in the Lower House. The most virtuous, the wisest, the most zealous man ought here to be preferr'd: but he that is most ambitious, and most prodigal, usually carries the day. The people formerly paid those whom they charged with the defence of their rights: now, they sell their votes to those who will give the highest price. Every man who is able to spend MUCH is sure of making a party, but not of being elected: for if he has got a competitor who spends MORE, in all probability

bability the latter will have the plurality of voices. Some get into parliament to pay their debts; others run in debt to get into parliament. Many ruin themselves in vain to obtain this honour. But often the candidates themselves do not pay this expence, but the heads of their party undertake to discharge it.

I have an example quite recent to produce, in the election that was made last week for one the members of the town of Windsor. This election has made a great noise here, on account of the excessive expences that two peers of the kingdom put themselves to in order to carry it from each other. The duke of St. A * *, governor of Windsor-castle, was one; and the duke of M * *, at this time one of the heads of the opposition, the other. The duke of St. A * * at last got the better.

During these times of election, the candidates, or those who undertake to support them, are obliged to keep an open table, and sometimes they have three hundred persons to treat in a day. He who makes the most people drunk may depend upon the greatest number of votes. Good strong-beer will effect all you want with the toping countryman; but they that are sober must be won over with money. The man of interest, who can bring in others, will have twenty, and sometimes thirty guineas for his own vote. He that will give the price, may have all the votes he can desire. Is it not surprising

prising that this should be almost the only way by which a man can obtain the honour of watching over the liberties of his countrymen? Thus, when the lust of governing introduced factions in Rome, money was distributed among the people, who suffer'd themselves to be corrupted by bribes, and the venality of their votes gave the fatal blow to the republic.

The great men of the kingdom, who are willing to keep up their credit in their respective counties, must be sure to keep their cellars open for the countrymen round about, and a principal part of the butler's office is to take care and make them drunk. They tell one here, that this is an effect of the English magnificence and hospitality. I believe so: but it cannot be denied that this fuddling magnificence is of bad consequence, and that this profusion of beer is the very cause why the labouring men, and especially gentlemens domestic servants, are so seldom inclin'd to sobriety.

There are some gentlemen who carry this complaisance to the common people yet farther. At those shews which are so much in fashion among the English, and which furnish them with occasions of debauchery at least as much as of exercise, I mean the horse-races, I have seen very great lords drink bumper after bumper to the health of the beggarly populace that surrounded them: I have seen them, when the country-fellows
threw

threw their hats up in the air, pull off their own peruques, and degrade, not their rank only, but humanity itself, to please a vile mob. This is what they call making themselves popular. The multitude do indeed testify their satisfaction by loud huzza's, and I am not surpriz'd at it: the most sure way to please the vulgar is to participate in their vices.

It cannot be denied, that a Roman senator was obliged to shew a great deal of condescension to the lowest of the Plebeians: when he solicited an office in the republic, he submitted even to embrace the knees of those for whose suffrages he was suing. But I should better approve the method of exhibiting spectacles, by which the Roman senators won the favour of the people, than that which they are obliged to make use of in England to gain the mechanic and the peasant. Public shews at least do not brutalize, nor produce that disorder which is always inseparable from drunkenness. And yet it was forbid at Rome, by the Tullian law, to give those games and feasts to the people, for fear of the tendency they might have to byass their suffrages.

Three months ago I was coming to London with one of the members of parliament, and we arrived at Leicester the same evening that there had been an election, which turned out quite differently from that at Windsor, the country-party having carried their

their point. The streets, full on both sides with people who were both drunk and insolent, were also filled with brutal acclamations of joy. Every-where were bonfires at a small distance from each other; all the houses of the victorious party were illuminated, and the zeal of the master within was known by the number of candles in his windows. According to this rule of judging, the greatest enemy the ministry had in the town was a butcher. The streets being so very light, some of the people unluckily knew the arms of the coach. They told the mob, who crouded about us, and call'd us whigs, and traitors to our country. We narrowly escaped being treated with blows instead of words, because they saw us drive into an inn which was not illuminated.

The night before there had been tumultuous assemblies of the populace, and seditious bills fix'd up at all the gates, which imported nothing less than burning the houses, and cutting the throats of all the adverse party.

Such is the drunkenness and confusion that usually attend these elections! Disorders of the same kind were formerly experienced among the Romans, but the republic was more attentive to find a remedy. Before the Fannian * law, the citizens of Rome often came

* The Fannian law regulated the superfluous expences of entertainments. Cincius was the chief author of it, as well as of the Muneral law, against those who corrupted the people by bribes to obtain their votes in elections.

came disguis'd in liquor to the public assemblies, in which the safety of their country was to be deliberated upon. An act of parliament against drunkenness would be salutary here in those assemblies of the people, wherein the guardians of their properties and the defenders of their liberties are to be chosen.

And what is the consequence of those excessive expences which the gentlemen are obliged to be at who are ambitious of being elected? Only this, that the very same members, whose ambition has ruined them, in order to get into parliament, are obliged, in order to restore their private affairs, to sell their votes, and the people who have so imprudently chosen them, to the court. The venality of the elected naturally follows the venality of the electors, and a man must not know human nature, who imagines another will sacrifice his own fortune to the good of his country. The only means of attaching the representatives to the publick good, is to make this coincide with their private advantage.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXIX.

To Mr. DUCLOS;

Letters of great men the truest pictures of their characters. Two letters of the unfortunate earl of ESSEX.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

YOU belong to an academy, in which care is taken to search out whatever is extant relating to famous men, whether they have render'd themselves so by their virtues or their vices, by their misfortune or their prosperity. It is sufficient to give us an interest in them, that they once play'd remarkable parts upon the theatre of the world; and we extend our curiosity so far, as to wish for an acquaintance even with their features. The letters of such men are the precious monuments by which the historian may discover their character, and the principle of all their actions, and wherein the philosopher may please himself with studying the human heart. The confidence of friendship, or the weakness of self-love makes them there throw off the mask which imposes on the multitude. There may be seen that he who saved his country

country had nothing in view but to leave a great name to posterity, and the hero appears no longer to be any thing more than another man.

In some letters that remain of the unfortunate earl of Essex, he has painted himself better than any historian that has mentioned him. I have chosen two of them, which I believe you will read with pleasure, and in which you will discover that violent and impetuous character which caused him to lose his head upon a scaffold.

A Letter from the earl of ESSEX to mr. ANTHONY BACON, brother to him that was afterwards chancellor.

“ Mr. BACON,

“ **I** Thank you for your careful and obli-
 “ ging letter: you endeavour to perswade
 “ me what I ardently wish, and faintly hope,
 “ namely, that it is possible to enter again into
 “ the good graces of her majesty: but your
 “ reasons, instead of flattering my hopes, change
 “ them into despair. You say that the queen
 “ never had a design to subject me to a publick
 “ condemnation, which shews her goodness:
 “ but she has consented to it, which shews
 “ the power of my enemies. I firmly believe,
 “ that the intentions of her majesty were not
 “ to have my cause judged in public; I flatter
 “ myself,

“ myself, that ever since my sentence, she
“ thinks of restoring me, and calling me a-
“ gain near her person ; but those who, when
“ I could not hinder them, have taken advan-
“ tage of opportunities, those who have am-
“ plified and urged every motive, to perswade
“ her majesty of the necessity of exposing
“ me to censure, those persons can, and will
“ make use of the same way to prevent the ta-
“ king of it off. You say, that my own errors
“ have hurt me, and that I should correct my-
“ self: It is true ; but those who know that
“ my faults may render me wise, and that if
“ ever I am restored to the queen’s good gra-
“ ces, I will not run the hazard of losing them
“ again ; those, I say, will not let me approach
“ her majesty. You say, that the queen never
“ forgets entirely where her heart has been
“ once engaged ; but I know not whether
“ Time may not have changed her, or rather
“ I am sure, that the false impressions which
“ have been given her of me, have had all
“ their effect ; because I cannot have leave to
“ plead my own cause before her. I know
“ what I owe to her majesty, both for having
“ created me, (I being in fact her creature) and
“ for having redeemed me, not being ignorant
“ that she hath saved me from total ruin :
“ wherefore, both for her first friendship, and
“ her last protection, I am bound still to pray
“ for her majesty ; and all my cares at present
“ are, to get my prayers both for her and my-
“ self to be better received : for thanks to
“ God,

“ God, those who would perswade the queen
 “ that I dissembled with her, cannot make
 “ him who knows the bottom of the heart be-
 “ lieve I have dissembled with him also. If
 “ they cannot bear that I should come near
 “ the queen, it is not in their power to hinder
 “ me from approaching the divine majesty,
 “ as I hope I do every day. As to your bro-
 “ ther, I look upon him to be a very honest
 “ man, and wish him all sorts of good, espe-
 “ cially for the love of you. Yourself I know
 “ have suffered more for and with me, than
 “ any friend I have; but I can only deplore
 “ my fate freely, as I now do. However, I
 “ advise you not to take the same party that I
 “ do, that of despair. You know the hurt
 “ that my letters have done me; therefore take
 “ care of this. You being the only man that
 “ interest yourself in my fortune, I cannot for-
 “ bear speaking openly with you, for the re-
 “ lief both of mine own heart and yours.

Your tender friend,

R. ESSEX.

The earl of ESSEX to Queen ELIZABETH.

“ FROM a mind that takes pleasure only
 “ in sorrow, from a soul enflamed with
 “ passion, from a heart torn in pieces with
 “ cares, regrets, and the fatigues of a voyage,
 “ in fine, from a man that hates himself, and
 “ all things which preserve his life, what ser-

“ vice can your majesty expect, since those
 “ of my past life have merited nothing for me
 “ but banishment and proscription in the most
 “ horrible of all countries? No, no ; pride,
 “ and the success of my enemies do but too
 “ much authorize me to redeem my wretched
 “ life from the odious prison of my body:
 “ And in that case your majesty will have no
 “ ground to disapprove the manner of my
 “ death, though the course of my life could
 “ not please you.

“ Your majesty’s banish’d servant,
 R O. E S S E X.

You see, sir, in this last letter, a specimen
 of that natural eloquence of the passions, which
 is often superior to all art. The sentiment
 even in common men dictates the expression ;
 and he who has most wit, does not always
 find it, when he searches after it.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.

L E T-



LETTER LXX.

To Mr. H * * ;

*Character of SHAKESPEAR. Several scenes
from his plays.*

LONDON, &c.

S I R,

I AM not surprized that you are tempted to get acquainted with SHAKESPEAR: He is of all authors, antient and modern, the most an original. As to that cotemporary of his, who dared to think himself his equal, and perhaps his superior, he is on all accounts far from being comparable to him. BEN JOHNSON, as DRYDEN himself calls him, 'is only 'a learned plagiary of the antients.' The first is truly a great genius, and nature has made you able to perceive it. Some passages of this poet, translated into our language, cannot but give you the highest idea of his merit. There is, indeed, more resemblance between him and you, than perhaps you suspect. He excels in that province which is your own: his imagination is equally rich and strong; he paints whatever he sees, and embellishes

M 4

what-

whatever he paints. The loves in the train of Venus are not represented with more grace in the pictures of ALBANUS, than SHAKESPEAR gives to those that attend Cleopatra, in the description of the pomp with which that queen presents herself to Mark Anthony, upon the banks of Cydnus. What he is deficient in, is the choice of his matter. Sometimes, in reading his pieces, I am surprized at the sublimity of this vast genius; but he does not suffer my admiration to continue long together. Miserable dawblings, worthy of those painters on tavern-walls, who imitate Tefniers, succeed to portraits, in which I discover all the grandeur and elevation of Raphael.

The reputation of this poet is so great, that I shall not be surprized if you suspect me of exaggeration. Those of our countrymen, who have mentioned him, have been content to praise him without judging. While you are taking the pains therefore to learn English, (which perhaps will not be of so much advantage to you as you may have been persuaded) I will give you some examples of what I advance. In matters of taste examples strike much better than argument. I make choice of a scene in the first part of Henry VI, which, whether we regard the subject, or the manner in which it is treated, would do honour to the great Corneille. It is easy, indeed, to perceive the value SHAKESPEAR himself put upon

upon it, by the pains he took to turn it into
* rhyme, contrary to his usual custom. This
particular, however, makes it more in the
taste of our theatre. You are to attend on-
ly to the master of the scene: for transla-
tions, especially in prose, do but very im-
perfectly represent the beauties of poesy.

S C E N E.

*The field of battle near Bourdeaux, the English
having been just routed by the French.*

Talbot.

O young John Talbot, I did send for thee,
To tutor thee in stratagems of war,
That Talbot's name might be in the reviv'd,
When sapless age, and weak unable limbs
Should bring thy father to his drooping chair.
But, O malignant and ill-boding stars!
Now thou art come unto a feast of death,
A terrible and unavoided danger,
Therefore, dear boy, mount on the swiftest
horse,

And I'll direct thee how thou shalt escape
By sudden flight. Come dally not; be gone.

John.

Is my name Talbot? and am I your son?
And shall I fly? O! if you love my mother,
Dishonour

* This circumstance, perhaps, occasion'd our author to prefer this scene to many others that are at least equally beautiful: for tho' the Abbé hath as few prejudices as most men, he is entirely prepossessed in favour of rhyme in dramatic pieces, even in comedy.

Dishonour not her honourable name,
 To make a bastard and a slave of me.
 The world will say he is not Talbot's blood,
 That basely fled when noble Talbot stood.

Talbot.

Fly, to revenge my death, if I be slain.

John.

He that flies so, will ne'er return again.

Talbot.

If we both stay, we both are sure to die.

John.

Then let me stay, and, father, do you fly:
 Your loss is great; so your regard should be;
 My worth unknown, no loss is known in me:
 Upon my death the French can little boast;
 In your's they will, in you all hopes are lost:
 Flight cannot stain the honour you have won;
 But mine it will, that no exploit have done.
 You fled for 'vantage, ev'ry one will swear;
 But if I bow, they'll say it was for fear.
 There is no hope that ever I will stay,
 If the first hour I shrink, and run away.
 Here on my knees I beg mortality,
 Rather than life preserv'd with infamy.

Talbot.

Shall all thy mother's hopes lie in one tomb?

John.

Ay, rather than I'll shame my mother's
 womb.

Talbot.

Upon my blessing, I command thee go.

John.

To fight I will, but not to fly the foe.

Talbot.

Talbot.

Part of thy father may be sav'd in thee.

John.

No part of him but will be shame in me.

Talbot.

Thou never had'st renown, and can'st not
lose it.

John.

Yes, your renowned name: shall flight
abuse it?

Talbot.

Thy father's charge shall clear thee from
the stain.

John.

You cannot witness for me, being slain.
If death be so apparent, then both fly.

Talbot.

And leave my followers here to fight and
die?

My age was never tainted with such shame.

John.

And shall my youth be guilty of such blame?
No more can I be sever'd from your side,
Than can yourself yourself in twain divide.
Stay, go, do what you will, the like do I;
To live I will not, if my father die.

Talbot.

Then here I take my leave of thee, fair son,
Born to eclipse thy life this afternoon:
Come, side by side together live and die,
And soul with soul from France to heav'n
shall fly.

This

This very affecting scene is followed by a new battle, in which the father saves his son's life. They separate again in the confusion, and after several excursions upon the stage, the father comes in wounded, and searches everywhere for his son, whom the soldiers at last bring in expiring. In the father's last words, SHAKESPEAR falls into a fault that sometimes happens to him, and deviates too much from nature by affecting sublimity.

Thou antick death, which laugh'st us
here to scorn,

Anon from thy insulting tyranny,

Coupled in bonds of perpetuity,

Two Talbots winged thro' the hither sky,

In thy despight shall scape mortality.

O thou whose wounds become hard-favour'd
death,

Speak to thy father e'er thou yield thy breath.

" Brave Death by speaking, whether he will

" or no;

" Imagine him a Frenchman, and thy foe.

" Poor boy, he smiles, methinks, as who

" should say,

" Had Death been French, then Death had

" dy'd to-day." *

Come, come and lay him in his father's arms,

My spirit can no longer bear these harms.

Soldiers,

* The four lines mark'd with asterisks, against which the chief force of our French author's objection lies, are thrown to the bottom of the page in fir T. H's edition, as unworthy of the rest.

Soldiers, adieu! I have what I would have,
Now my old arms are young John Talbot's
grave.

In the second part of Henry VI, there is a scene of a quite different kind of pathetick, which rises almost to horror by the truth it contains. A captain of a ship comes to inform the king that cardinal Beaufort is at the point of death, having been suddenly seized with a very violent disease that distracts him; that he blasphemes God, and curses men; that sometimes he talks as if the ghost of duke Humphrey stood by his side; at other times calls the king, and imagining he speaks to his majesty, *whispers to his pillow, the secrets of his over-charged soul.*

The scene changes to the cardinal's bed-chamber.

*Enter king Henry, Salisbury, and Warwick,
to the cardinal in bed.*

King Henry.

How fares my lord? Speak, Beaufort to
thy sovereign.

Cardinal.

If thou beest Death, I'll give thee England's
treasure,

Enough to purchase such another island,
So thou wilt let me live, and feel no pain.

King

King Henry.

Ah, what a sign it is of evil life,
Where Death's approach is seen so terrible!

Warwick.

Beaufort, it is thy sovereign speaks to thee.
Cardinal.

Bring me unto my trial when you will.
Dy'd he not in his bed? Where should he die?
Can I make men live whe'r they will or no?
Oh, torture me no more, I will confess.---
Alive again? Then shew me where he is;
I'll give a thousand pounds to look upon him.-
He hath no eyes, the dust hath blinded them:
Comb down his hair; look, look, it stands
upright,

Like lime-twigs set to catch my winged soul:
Give me some drink, and bid th'apothecary
Bring the strong poison that I bought of him.

King Henry.

Oh thou eternal mover of the heavens,
Look with a gentle eye upon this wretch!
Oh, beat away the busy meddling fiend,
That lays strong siege unto this wretch's soul,
And from his bosom purge this black despair!

Warwick.

See how the pangs of death do make him
grin.

Salisbury.

Disturb him not, let him pass peaceably.

King Henry.

Peace to his soul, if God's good pleasure be!
Lord cardinal, if thou think'st on heaven's
bliss,

Hold

Hold up thy hand, make signal of thy hope.
He dies, and makes no sign : O God, forgive
him !

Now, fir, to imitate SHAKESPEAR in the structure of his pieces, and give you at the same time some idea of his comic, and the manner in which he makes the populace speak, here follows a scene of a quite opposite kind, which is to be found in the following act of the same play. Jack Cade, a wretch that has been seduc'd by the duke of York to call himself the son of Mortimer, appears upon the stage, followed by several chiefs, who are all chosen from the dregs of the people.

Cade.

When I am king, as a king I will be---
there shall be no money, all shall eat and
drink upon my score, and I will apparel
them all in one livery, that they may agree
like brothers, and worship me their lord.

Dick the butcher.

The first thing we do, let's kill all the
lawyers.

Cade.

Nay, that I mean to do. Is not this a lamentable thing that the skin of an innocent lamb should be made parchment; that parchment being scribbled over, should undo a man? Some say the bee stings; but I say 'tis bees-wax: for I did but once seal a thing,
and

and I was never my own man since. How now? Who is there?

Enter a Clerk.

Weaver.

The clerk of Chatham; he can write and read, and cast accompts.

Cade.

O monstrous!

Weaver.

We took him setting boy's copies.

Cade.

Here's a villain!

Weaver.

He's a book in his pocket with red letters in't.

Cade.

Nay, then he's a conjurer.

Dick.

Nay, he can make obligations, and write court-hand.

Cade.

I am sorry for't: the man is a proper man, of mine honour: unless I find him guilty, he shall not die. Come hither, firrah, I must examine thee. What is thy name?

Clerk.

Emanuel.

Dick.

They use to write it on the top of letters: 'twill go hard with you.

Cade.

Let me alone. Dost thou use to write thy name?

name? Or hast thou a mark to thyself like an honest plain-dealing man?

Clerk.

Sir, I thank God I have been so well brought up, that I can write my name.

All.

He hath confess'd: away with him, he is a villain and a traitor.

Cade.

Away with him, I say: hang him with his pen and inkhorn about his neck.

They carry him out in fact; and the only thing that surprises me is, that SHAKESPEAR had not hang'd him upon the stage. Some scenes after, lord Say is taken by the rebels, and the people accuse him of having been the cause of the augmentation of taxes, &c. Jack Cade's speech to him runs in the following terms:

Well, he shall be beheaded for it ten times. Ah, thou say, thou serge, nay, thou buckram lord, now art thou within point-blank of our jurisdiction regal. What canst thou answer to my majesty for giving up Normandy to Monsieur Basimecu the dauphin of France? Be it known unto thee by these presents, even the presence of lord Mortimer, that I am the besom that must sweep the court clean of such filth as thou art. Thou hast most traiterously corrupted the youth of this realm in erecting a gram-

mar-school, and whereas before our forefathers had no books, but the score and the tally, thou hast caused printing to be used; and contrary to the king, his crown and dignity, thou hast built a paper-mill. It will be proved to thy face that thou hast men about thee that usually talk of a noun a verb, and such abominable words, as no christian ear can endure to hear. Thou hast appointed justices of the peace, to call poor men before them about matters they were not able to answer. Moreover thou hast put them in prison, and because they could not read, thou hast hanged them; when indeed, only for that cause they have been most worthy to live.

His lordship is at last carried off to lose his head.

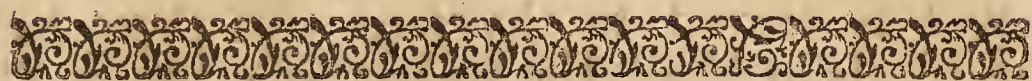
SHAKESPEAR's plays, sir, are full of such farcical scenes as this. What pity that a man who knew nature so well, should have employ'd his great talent to describe what is meanest in it, and that an almost universal genius was either ignorant or negligent of the rules of his art. I know not whether he formed, * or whether he followed the taste of his nation: but this I know, that even at present the English put too much value upon this low buffoonry of a mob, which ought to

* Monsieur l'Abbé might have informed himself by reading mr. Pope's excellent preface.

to make nobody laugh but persons of the same rank with those described.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXXI.

TO M. DE BUFFONS;

Mistakes of the English and French in judging of each other. Idea of the politicks of a noisy English patriot given in a pleasant history.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

TH O' the English travel much into France, the common people are not the less ignorant of what concerns our nation. Most of the French, who leave their country to seek a fortune elsewhere, are not the sort of people that can give an advantageous idea of their countrymen: and yet it is from these adventurers that the English in general form their judgment of the French. A great many persons, on the contrary, among us, entertain a too favourable opinion of the English, whom they know only by the most polite among them. They think them all

such men as they have seen now-and-then at Paris, and the great qualities of two or three individuals, which ought to have been confined to them only, have turned to the advantage of the whole nation. Such men as my lord BOLINGBROKE and my lord CHESTERFIELD are very scarce, not in this country only, but even in the very age they adorn.

As much as a man who quits his own country to fix in another ought to be suspected, so much the more favourably should he be thought of who travels only for instruction: an equal risk is run of being deceived in ascribing the vices of the one or the virtues of the other to their different nations. Particular persons ought to enjoy all the honour, or bear all the shame of these examples.

The gross error of the English who were never out of their country, with respect to us, is inspired into them by their authors. Their theatrical poets are always careful to paint us as despicable creatures, and their writers of all kinds exaggerate excessively the riches and abundance of their own country. By the praises they bestow on it England should seem the land of promise, or even the terrestrial paradise. On the contrary, they represent France as a kingdom rich in appearance, but poor in fact; where magnificence reigns among the great, but every one else lives in misery. In the mu- they

seum at Oxford, among other curiosities, they show a pair of wooden slippers, which are call'd French shoes, as if they were the common wear of our nation. Hence it happens that the people in general think all the French are like those wretched refugees, who, in the coffee-houses of London, excite compassion rather than contempt. It is after those originals that the comic authors paint our manners: in one of their plays, a French Petit-maitre drops a bit of cheese in pulling his handkerchief out of his pocket.

Some time ago M. DU FAYS and I happened in company with one of those Englishmen, in whom self-love was thoroughly flattered by the prejudices conceiv'd against us. He had been a pretty considerable man in his county, before he spent a part of his estate to get a seat in parliament. The minister, at whose disposal his voice had always been, promis'd to re-imburse him; but perhaps did not find him of importance enough to make it necessary to keep his word. The gentleman, who had once paid so dear for this honour, would not buy it again at the same price; and now actually declaims against the government, whose measures he had so long approv'd without exception. As he has heard the greatest politicians harangue, he really thinks he is become one of them himself, and has not understanding enough to suspect his own ignorance. Dull as he is, he thinks himself humourous, being deceiv'd, as most

men who pique themselves upon this quality are, by seeing persons more stupid than himself, who laugh at his buffooneries.

Gentlemen, said he to us, your country must needs be very poor, because so many people are oblig'd to leave it, to get a living in this. 'Tis you that furnish us with dancing-masters, tailors, and valets; and we must do you the justice to say, that for dressing a wig, or dancing a minuet, the French exceed all other nations. I cannot comprehend how men come to be so in love with dancing, in a country where they have little cause to be merry. Is it not a sad case, for example, that you cultivate your vines for us only? Our guineas have great charms in your eyes, and I imagine that good wine is almost as scarce among you as money: I would advise the Frenchmen who love wine, therefore, to come and drink it in England.

Sir, with your leave, answer'd M. DU FAYS, you are mistaken: the sort of wine which you take the greatest part of does not agree with our taste; it is as disagreeable to our palate as it is delicious to yours. There is none of it made but in the maritime provinces, nor any brought to Paris but for the consumption of the English who live there.

If you find in London so many Frenchmen to serve you, the reason is because your people of fashion are mad with the desire of dressing, combing, and powdering like us.

They

They are fond of our modes, and pay those people dear, who teach them to be proud of what is ridiculous among the French.

Sir, continued our English gentleman, (without regarding your brother academician's * answer) I know nothing of other countries, having never travelled; but I maintain, for all that, that England is the richest of all countries. This plenty would indeed soon make another appearance, if England was govern'd in another manner. I myself, sir, whatever you may think of me, have been a member of parliament, and you may suppose I ought to know something of what I say. I repent that I made no greater figure in that capacity, as I had wherewithal to make head against the minister as well as another man: but at that time I did not sufficiently know him. I have known too much since at my own expence: my excess of confidence in him lessen'd my fortune, but my judgment is now grown sound. I am always for liberty, and for the people: as it is from the latter that we derive all our authority, it is in them that our whole support is founded. It is owing to the people that we are what we are, and to us that they enjoy their present privileges. For this reason, when any commotion or rebellion arises among them, when they even fetch a criminal out of prison, and carry a magistrate to the gallows, we take no care to remedy such

N 4

disor-

* M. du Fays, who died in the year 1739, belonged to the Academy of sciences.

disorders, which in fact rather give us pleasure than otherwise. We dare not openly favour such disturbances; but it is not our interest to hinder them: we are oblig'd to pay our court to the people, because we know not how soon we may want their assistance.

But, sir, interrupted DU FAYS, does this contempt of laws, this disregard for a man's life, seem to you such a trivial matter? A mere trifle indeed, replied he, to one that understands our government well. A magistrate more or less signifies nothing; we can always add to the number when we please. The whole object of our policy is to hinder the king from growing too mighty. For this reason, when we grant him any demand, as of money or troops, we harangue warmly against the daily increase of his power. We declaim against monarchical authority, and give ourselves an unbounded loose against the ministry; which are topics that always satisfy the people. A man should hear us upon these subjects, if he would thoroughly know the nature and extent of English liberty. We have members in our House of Commons who speak like so many Ciceroes.

Sir, added I, would it not be more reasonable to make less bustle, and yet not to grant the court what appears to you contrary to the good of the people? And when you have a just king, who seeks nothing but to
make

make himself beloved. --- To make himself beloved! interrupted he with a loud laugh; this is just the language of the country where you were born. To make himself beloved! God preserve us from a king who should carry his point in this; for nothing more fatal could happen to us. We should then very soon become Frenchmen. The partisans of the court never fail, upon all occasions, to magnify the mildness of the reign under which we live. The king and his ministers, say they, make no severe or cruel use of the penal laws, which they have found means to get passed in parliament: but there is no danger which the nation ought more to fear, than this very moderation and mildness. They do all in their power to prevent our feeling the yoke they endeavour to impose upon us. We ought always to suspect that a prince, who seems desirous of gaining the love of his people, has in fact no other view but to surprise them. No gentlemen, we shall never love our kings;---at least, I hope so:---It is our interest to hate them, be they what they will; and for my part, I declare, that I shall hate them always, whilst the least warmth remains in my veins.

Is it not surprizing, sir, that such men as I have now described to you, should, by their own money, or that of others, become members of so venerable a body as the House of Commons, an assembly entrusted with the safety and liberty of their country? On the
other

other side, this house is composed of so great a number, that it is impossible there should not be capable and well-meaning men among them. It is the interest of the English that these should not be fewer than they are, which if they were, the court would more easily dispose of the whole. Even in republicks it is dangerous for the authority of the people to be in the hands of a small number. The Decemvirs became the tyrants of Rome.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXXII.

To the Duke of D * * *.

Difference between men. Fall of the Italian opera in England. Judgment and censure of the English taste in matters of entertainment. Comparison of the French and Italian operas.

LONDON, &c.

MY LORD DUKE,

THERE is often more distance between one man and another, than between some of our own species, organised just as we are, and an animal of some other species that approaches the nearest to ours. Men of the lowest

lowest capacities have the five senses, which are common to us all, though without the least opening in the ways of wisdom, or the knowledge of any pleasures but what are material. The soul that they possess seems to be entirely lost upon them; whereas the favour'd of nature, by a peculiar felicity, have as many senses as they have tastes. A thousand objects affect them, which others cannot perceive. Poetry, painting, the arts of all kinds, raise in them sensations, which the former would envy if they knew any thing of their charms. There are many men whose ears are not smitten with music; but happy those, who like you, have a soul to be moved by it. It dissipates the vapours of the most cruel melancholy, and affords the most soft and voluptuous sensibility. Even in the breast of sorrow itself this taste procures a kind of pleasure, and it is to this powerful art alone that we are indebted for the mixture of two such agreeable sentiments.

When I arrived at London, Farinelli, whom you have heard at Paris, was the delight of the court, and I then saw the Italian opera in all its splendor. At present, it is fallen from its glory; Farinelli is in Spain, and though most of the judges are very well content with the performer that succeeds him, these entertainments are not relished. Mr. HANDEL's efforts to call back the publick taste are ineffectual: the house is deserted, the undertakers are ruin'd.

The

The best performers are all sent away,
Confounded, supperless, and without pay.

In a word, the fall of the Italian opera in England, which has been so long predicted, is at last come to pass, and it has been my fortune to be an eye-witness of this great revolution. The English accuse us of a great deal of inconstancy and fickleness in our taste; but it is not for them to cast this reproach, who are in many respects more variable than the French. We continue to see with the same pleasure the fine operas of Lully, which have been composed now above sixty years.

To what can be attributed this general disgust for a kind of spectacle, of which the English seem'd lately so fond, if not to the great disproportion that was found between the prodigious expence it cost them, and the little pleasure they received in it?

It is long ago that mr. ADDISON ridiculed the custom of supporting an opera in a foreign tongue, which few people understood so well as to make it a tolerable amusement. Speaking of what might be said of him by an historian three hundred years after his speculations were written, part of the imaginary character runs in these words: "As for his speculations, we still understand enough of them to see the diversions and characters of the English nation in his time. Not but that we are to make allowance for the mirth and humour of the author, who has, doubtless, strained

“ strained many representations of things be-
 “ yond the truth : for if we interpret his words
 “ in their literal meaning, we must suppose,
 “ that in his time, an audience would set out an
 “ evening to hear a dramatic performance writ-
 “ ten in a language that they did not un-
 “ derstand*.

The Italian opera, to speak properly, is nothing but a concert; and a concert of three hours is too long for those who do not understand the language. The charms of music are not made for the ear only; the heart should have its share in the entertainment. The impression which sound gives to words cannot be properly felt in any other tongue, but that which is natural to us. We may judge of this by LULLY's recitative, which conveys such ravishing delight to us Frenchmen, but makes an Englishman or an Italian fall a laughing. These foreigners do not consider, that it is not enough to know all the words of a tongue; and that it is necessary to speak and understand it easily, to make it as it were their own, in order to be affected with the musick that expresses it. Mr. ADDISON has judiciously remarked, that when the English say our musick is good for nothing, they prove no more, than that it is not to their taste.†

Recitative is nothing but declamation in the singing way, the whole expression and beauty of which can arise only from the agreement it

* Spectator, N^o. 101, Vol. II.

† Spectator, N^o. 29, Vol. I.

it has with the accent, which is peculiar to every tongue. I am not speaking here of the pronunciation of words, but of that kind of tone, which, without perceiving it, we give to a whole phrase; which tone varies, according to the different character of nations, and the nature of the languages which they respectively speak. Mr. ADDISON, who had travelled into Italy, pretends that the Italians make use of the same sounds to witness their admiration, which the English familiarly produce to express their anger*. Hence, says he, it happens, that those English spectators who do not understand Italian, are apt to think that a prince is just going to destroy his confident, when at that very instant he is only admiring his virtues.

The opera, at the first rise of it in London, was only an imitation of ours; both poem and musick were English: afterwards English words were set to Italian musick: but the roughness of this tongue not well agreeing with soft modulations, these new operas were less pleasing than the former. The next art was, to make one of the interlocutors speak in English, and the other in Italian; which was almost as ridiculous a whim as our comic operas. At last the English proceeded to operas purely Italian, both the words and the musick: But these are now grown as distasteful as any of those kinds before mentioned.

As

* In the Spectator, N^o. 18, Vol. I. something like what our author says may be collected from different sentences.

As in all the actions of mankind something must always be charged to the account of vanity, I suspect that those who contributed the most to support the Italian operas, and in particular the ladies, had chiefly in view to make people think they understood Italian. But the English, who are naturally sage, perceiv'd at last, how ridiculous it was to go and tire themselves regularly twice a week, three tedious hours each time, purely to gain the title of linguist. It was, indeed, paying somewhat extravagantly. Perhaps also many others, who had no great taste for the Italian operas, were yet willing, for want of an opera in English, and in order to keep up a publick entertainment that might rival the French, which makes one of the principal ornaments of Paris, to become subscribers. The English would have their capital emulate ours in every thing, and the pains they take to make it do so, seem to imply a tacit confession to the disadvantage of London.

When I said that the English are not entertained at the opera, so strange a paradox was enough to surprize you: but I dare assure you, that the being present at one of these performances is enough to prove it. They have always seem'd to me to hear an opera, as they would have heard a penitential psalm set to musick, and I have seen some of their operas altogether as sorrowful as one of those psalms. How full soever therefore, the house was, how much soever decorated and illuminated,

nated, I could only look upon it as the most magnificent temple that ever was consecrated to *Uneasiness*, where people of all ranks, the vulgar only excepted, pay their homage. When I have been there, every thing seem'd to favour of the presence of the divinity, to whom I have sometimes also sacrificed as well as the rest. In vain will they persuade me, that this serious, not to say sorrowful air of the auditors, proceeds only from their exquisite sense of the charms of musick: that soft and agreeable melancholy which she inspires, is painted upon the face in quite another manner than chagrin and weariness: the tender sentiment is marked by features different from those of a gloomy affection; and the yawns I have so often seen, if there were nothing else, would decide in what manner the spectators were employed at these representations.

Is it surprizing that the English are grown tired of the Italian opera? Three quarters of the spectators did not comprehend what was sung, and it was natural for Farinelli himself to set them a yawning, when he passed from an air to recitative. If it be true that the Italians excel in musick all the other people of Europe, it would be most becoming of a wise nation to form their taste upon that of the Italians, and to avail themselves of their beauties, as Lully did, as Rameau does at this day with so much success; and not to renounce their own language, to sing in that of Italy, as the English have done.

You

You see, my lord duke, that I do not pretend, in any respect, to diminish the merit of the Italian musick, which all Europe has adopted, and of which all men of sense, even in France, acknowledge the beauty: But admitting its excellence, I think one may nevertheless blame an opera in an unknown tongue, especially as the poem is commonly without art in the design, and quite flat in the several details. I appeal to you, who are so great a judge both of poetry and musick: For if masters only can judge well of these arts, you are an able master of both lyres. Among so many poets who have written Italian operas, there is reckoned but one abbot Metastafé.

The Italians have the glory of being the inventors of this spectacle; but the honour of having brought it to perfection cannot be denied to the French. The dances and chorusses, which give such a variety and gaiety to the French opera, are wanting at London as well as in Italy; and bad as their operas are, it gives me pain to see them performed by actors, whose voices indeed are always just, often fine, and sometimes even admirable; but who have neither action, grace, nor countenance; who by their restrained gestures and shocking attitudes, make the eyes often pay dear for the pleasure of the ears. Though Farinelli was a tolerable good figure, I never saw a man have less nobleness and grace in his manner than he, except his successor. The grimaces and contortions of the celebrated Strada were insupportable:

portable: whenever she sung, she had the air of a Pythonefs, and it was absolutely neceffary not to fee her, if you were defirous of hearing her with pleafure.

It may be faid, that our French opera has alfo great defects, and I confeff it; that our actors do not underftand mufick, and I am forry it is true; that moft of them fing falfeſly, and the reproach is juſt; that our recitative is too languifhing, and our mufick not fufficiently various; that he who conducts the orchestra, makes more noiſe than any one of the inſtruments, &c. I will not deny any part of the charge: But with all theſe faults our opera is amuſing, and that at London is not. Ours will always ſubſiſt; but the English may bring over new fingers from Italy as often as they pleaſe; they will find it difficult to keep up a theatrical performance, which will always coſt them too much in proportion to the pleaſure it affords.

It were to be wiſhed, as I have already intimated, that the ceſſation of the Italian opera would induce the English once more to attempt to eſtabliſh one in their own language. If the ſucceſs was not at firſt altogether fortunate, they might in time accuſtom themſelves to it, and their tongue would gain much into the bargain. It wants greatly to be ſoftened, which mufick would contribute more than any thing elſe to effect. The poets would find themſelves obliged, by degrees, to reject that great number of harſh ſyllables, and thoſe frequent

quent hiatus's which are an obstacle to the harmony of their verses. The strength of the English expression is now often over-balanc'd by the harshness of the numbers: whereas, I doubt not but the operas of Quinault augmented the sweetness of French poesy.

But the attention here is quite fixed on other objects. The English, who regard the opera only as a concert, will no longer have any but those that are least expensive, and in which dresses and decorations may be dispensed with. Upon this theatre, where the charms of fine dancing have not yet been admitted, there will be no other actors for the future, but those who had been spectators, and who will dance without giving themselves pain. Do not think I banter, since what I say is literally true. There is a subscription proposed of six hundred persons, who shall give each two guineas a year, to maintain hereafter, in the place where the opera has hitherto been, a concert and ball, twice a week, during the winter. For those who love neither dancing nor musick, there will be a large room to play in, which perhaps will not be the worst filled. If this establishment takes place, it may prove dangerous to the English, who are already but too much inclined to gaming. It would be better to restore the opera, even in the condition it was; because it is preferable, after all, to wear away three uneasy hours of time, than to run the hazard of being ruined in a minute.

The wisdom of the English government has

foreseen all the consequences of such a project, and the king has signified, that the taking in subscriptions for it would displease him: but this declaration may serve only to encourage those who are in opposition to the ministry. The duchess of * * * has given the example by subscribing first. Such is the spirit of party, that zeal for the publick good, of which it assumes the dress, is often that which affects it the least, and the general interest is often sacrificed to the passion of particulars.

I have the honour to be,

My lord duke,

your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXXIII.

TO M. DE CREBILLON.

Different characters of CORNEILLE, RACINE, and CREBILLON. Censure of the horrid cruelty in some of SHAKESPEAR'S plays. Analysis of the tragedy of TITUS ANDRONICUS, which has been by tradition ascrib'd to SHAKESPEAR.

LONDON, &c.

S I R,

YOU have laid our theatre under great obligations. CORNEILLE was of too elevated a genius to have imitators, and the
imi-

imitators of RACINE have only copied his faults. Love, the soul of their pieces, is continually whining in an effeminate tone. An eclipse was coming over the glory of our tragic scene, when you enlighten'd it again by the new species of writing with which you have enriched it. Born with that happy genius, which instead of wanting a model to follow, is itself a model to others; you were the first, among us, who knew the art of carrying terror and compassion, the two great objects of tragedy, to their highest degree of elevation.

In Atreus and Thyestes, one of the master-pieces of our theatre, terror and compassion succeed each other by turns, and sometimes march together with almost equal pace. I know not whether the sight of the cruel Atreus makes me tremble more than the aspect of the unhappy Thyestes melts me into tenderness. But with as much force as any author that ever assumed the buskin, upon any theatre whatsoever, you carry our terror but just to the pitch to which it ought to rise. Your superior taste has made you perceive, that there is a certain point in which the emotion may be too strong, and of consequence disagreeable.

Besides, in your works, terror arises rather from the force of the sentiment, and the energy of the expressions, than from the horror of the spectacle. Atreus does not murder Plisthenes before the eyes of the spectators, and

the ghost of Ægisthus makes me tremble without appearing in my sight.

It is quite otherwise with SHAKESPEAR. Though no man gave more force than he to his expressions, the terror he inspires is chiefly due to the frightful objects he exposes upon the stage. In his tragedy of the Moor of Venice, Othello is seen to strangle his wife in her bed. As to FLETCHER, another old English poet, he succeeded better in moving this passion than SHAKESPEAR. But since you desire to know how far this latter carried his cruel fierceness upon the stage, I will give you an extract of one of his pieces, that is most remarkable for the horror of the action. It cannot fail of surprising you; but remember, I beg, that you desired me to chuse one of those that are the most opposite to our manners, and our taste. Reflect also, that SHAKESPEAR lived in the reign of queen Elizabeth, at a time, when in France nobody knew what a tragedy was; that he himself did not understand the rules of the theatre; and finally, that this piece is one of those, that have not, for a long time past, been performed.*

Extract

* Mr. POPE, one of the greatest admirers of SHAKESPEAR, pretends that only some scenes of this piece belong to him: but in this opinion he is particular, nor does he bring sufficient proof to support it. This is the note of the French author, who was mistaken in saying that Mr. POPE was singular in this opinion. The following note stands in Sir THOMAS HANMER's edition, and is agreeable to the sentiment of most good judges. " This

" is

Extract from *TITUS ANDRONICUS*, a tragedy
of (*ascribed to*) SHAKESPEAR.

Names of the principal persons whom the
poet introduces upon the scene.

Saturninus, son of the emperor of Rome,
and afterwards emperor himself.

Bassianus, his brother.

Titus Andronicus, a Roman general against
the Goths.

Marcus Andronicus, brother to *Titus*, a tri-
bune of the people.

Tamora, queen of the Goths, a captive.

Lavinia, daughter to *Titus Andronicus*.

Marcus,

Quintus,

Mucius,

Lucius,

Alarbus,

Chiron,

Demetrius,

} the sons of *Titus Andronicus*.

} the sons of *Tamora*.

Aaron, a Moor, beloved by *Tamora*.

Titus Andronicus returns to Rome, trium-
phant over the Goths, and brings *Tamora* and
her three sons prisoners. He has lost several

O 4

of

“ is one of the plays which ought not to be look’d upon as one
“ of SHAKESPEAR’s Composition. By giving it the credit of
“ a few good lines, he has got the discredit of writing the
“ whole.” As to proof, what greater can there be than that
it wants the distinguishing marks of his stile, and his manner of
thinking and writing ?

of his own sons in the last battle, whose bodies he brings with him. According to the laws of Rome, one of the sons of Tamora is condemned to be sacrificed on the tomb of the sons of Titus, to appease their manes. The queen implores in vain to procure the pardon of her son, and the Roman general orders him to suffer the rigour of the law.

A new emperor is to be chosen at Rome, and Titus, beloved by the soldiers, has the voice of the people in his favour. But our generous Roman, however, instead of taking this advantage to himself, demands, and obtains the suffrages of the people for Saturninus, son of the emperor lately dead. The prince in gratitude would crown Lavinia; but scarce had he proposed it, before his brother Bassianus carries off the lady before his face. The brothers of Lavinia take the part of her lover: their father Titus endeavours to rescue his daughter from the ravisher, and is stop'd in his passage by his sons, one of whom he kills upon the spot. Saturninus, who sees all this, instead of punishing his own brother, the sole cause of the whole disaster, swears revenge for the affront put upon him against Titus, whom he cannot suspect to have the least part in it, and who hath sufficiently testified his disapprobation, by the death of his son. The emperor, to begin his vengeance, marries Tamora, now become the implacable enemy of the Roman general, since the sacrifice of her child to the manes of the young Andronicus. This is
what

what the first act contains: and be not afraid, fir, for the others; I answer for it, the author will not relent, and has imagination enough to keep up easily the character which his piece promises at the beginning.

The second act passes in a forest, where the emperor hunts with all his court. SHAKESPEAR there represents the new empress Tamora as wholly taken up with a Moor she is fond of, and for whose sake she loses the company, and repairs to an appointed rendezvous: she is talking of conducting him into a certain grot, when she is surprized in his company by Bassianus and Lavinia, who reproach her for leaving the chace for this close interview, with a man no less contemptible in his condition, than shocking in his person. In the mean time the sons of the empress came up, whom she excites to revenge her cause. By her order they stab Bassianus her husband's brother: but this is not sufficient; she orders them likewise to violate Lavinia; and the princes, worthy sons of such a mother, have the cruelty to obey her.

While this abominable action is supposed to be committed behind the scene, two sons of Titus come, as on purpose, to fall into a pit, where Aaron, the honest Moor, has prepared a snare for them. The dead body of Bassianus lies there; and the two brothers, equally innocent and unhappy, are accused of having been his assassins.

Demetrius and Chiron return upon the stage,
and

and leave there Lavinia, whom they have violated, and whose tongue and hands they have cut off, to deprive her of all means of revealing their crime. The blood still runs out at each corner of her mouth, and mingles with the tears that trickle from her eyes. In this condition she appears throughout the play, and almost in every scene in it.

In the third act Titus, ignorant hitherto of his daughter's misfortune, strives in vain to obtain pardon for his sons, who are condemned to die as the murderers of Bassianus. In this situation, Marcus, brother to this unfortunate father, brings to him his deplorable daughter, in her mutilated condition. He guesses in part the horrors that have passed, and the impression that so many calamities at once must naturally make upon a parent, is painted with all imaginable force; his very hairs stand upright: but do not think I shall give you a translation of such passages, which are too shocking to be read without horror: let it suffice that I present you a history of all the frightful scenes that are exposed to the eyes of the spectators. It is impossible, without shuddering, to think of the anguish of this unfortunate old man. He has killed one of his sons; two of the others are ready to lose their lives upon a scaffold, and his daughter stands before him in a condition more terrible than death itself. But fate has not yet plunged him into the depth of his misfortunes; SHAKESPEAR's imagination will find

find him new afflictions, greater, if possible, than any of the former.

While Titus is calling for vengeance from heaven, the rascally Moor comes to him from the emperor, to propose, as a favour, the purchasing the lives of his two sons; but to obtain them, either himself, his brother Marcus, or Lucius, the fourth son, is to cut off one of his hands. You must not dispute circumstances with our poet, they are all good that contribute to augment to the horror of his piece. After a very pathetic combat of generosity between these three Romans, the old man prevents his son and his brother, by offering his own hand privately to the moor, who instantly does the business. Immediately after, this execrable monster comes in again to insult the wretched father, bringing on one side the hand he had just cut off, and on the other the heads of his two sons. Remember that Lavinia, such as I have described her, is present all the while, and reflect, if it be possible to imagine a picture more frightful and shocking; or rather, draw the curtain over such horrible objects, which can inspire only disagreeable sentiments. You had better lose something of this play, than to keep it too long under your inspection.

Before we come to the unravelling of the plot, and in order to relieve you by the way, (for the recital of so much cruelty must necessarily have fatigued you) it is proper to tell you, that the principal event of the fourth act,
is

is the delivery of the empress, who brings in to the world an ugly bastardly black, the exact resemblance of his father. Tamora orders him to be stifled; but Aaron, who has nothing humane but the blind tenderness of a father towards his children, snatches the little monster out of the nurse's arms, kisses, and caresses it, and, in a word, saves its life.

If the crimes committed in this piece are frightful, the vengeance that is to expiate them will not inspire you with less horror. Lucius, the only son that remains to the unhappy Titus, after having made his escape from Rome, returns, at the end of some time, with a powerful army of Goths. During his absence, Titus, who survives his misfortunes only to be revenged, counterfeits the madman, in order to deceive his enemies. The guilty Tamora, in hopes to draw him into her snare, pays him a visit, accompanied by her two sons, Chiron and Demetrius, all in disguise. She calls herself Vengeance, and says her attendants are Rape and Murder: the old man pretends to be deceived, and accepts the services they offer him, to be revenged for the death of his sons. By the advice of this wicked woman, the emperor caused an interview to be proposed to Lucius, who now invests the city of Rome, at his father's house. Lucius accepts the invitation, and the empress hopes to sacrifice both father and son to her fury. She goes out, and leaves her two sons disguised with Titus.---I have not thought it worth while to
remark

remark upon all the contradictions of probability that are found in this tragedy, which, if it were not for some pathetic passages, would rather pass for the whimsy of a disorder'd imagination, than for the work of a great poet.

The emperor and empress are to come and dine with Titus. The moment of vengeance is now arrived : scarce is Tamora gone out, but he causes Chiron and Demetrius to be seized by his domestics, and with his one remaining hand cuts their throats one after the other, whilst Lavinia, his daughter, holds the basin that receives their blood with her two stumps.

Some moments after enters Lucius, with the emperor and empress. They sit down to table, when Titus, dressed like a cook, serves up to Tamora a pye, composed of the flesh of her sons. He has already taken away the little remainder of life from his miserable daughter; nor is it long before he interrupts the abominable feast, by informing the empress that she is eating her children; and then immediately stabs her. The emperor revenges the death of his wife upon Titus, and Lucius revenges that of his father upon the emperor. As to the detestable moor, he is condemned to be buried alive, and regrets nothing at last, so much as his not having committed more crimes. What a scene of blood and slaughter is here! How could a man imagine such a spectacle as this! And how fierce must the temper of those people be, who could amuse themselves at the representation of it!

I have

I have done, sir; for I fancy you are not less weary than myself of all these horrors. Bad as mankind is, I question if there be any such human savages as the bloody moor, and the cruel Tamora. CORNEILLE is said to have made men greater and more virtuous than they are: EURIPIDES is reproach'd for making them too wicked: but SHAKESPEAR has made them worse, perhaps, than is consistent with human nature.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXXIV.

TO M. DU CLOS;

Compliments to M. DU CLOS upon his having undertaken the history of LEWIS XI. Character of some historians. Idea of history. Taste of the English for mathematicks makes them neglect the history of their country.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

THE interest I take in whatever regards you, ought to answer for the pleasure I received from the news you have communicated to me. I am charmed that the excellence of your pen has been so soon perceived, and

and that it is set apart for a work the most glorious to you, and the most useful to the nation. In proportion as the history of the reign of LEWIS XI is remarkable, the more difficult is it to write: it is an honourable circumstance for you, that this very reason it was that determined the choice of the writer. Those who have entrusted you with so laborious and painful a task know what your courage is, and what are your talents: they foresaw that difficulties would serve only to raise the merit of a work which you were so happy as to conquer. With the most sprightly imagination, you possess that metaphysick of the mind which ascends to the source of things, which perceives equally the consequences in the principles, and the causes in the effects, and which throws a light upon whatever it treats of. You know men, and love truth: what advantages are these to succeed in this kind of labour which you have undertaken!

I do not scruple to say moreover, that we have excellent models amongst our authors, and I will trust to your taste for the choice of them. What philosophy does there appear in the abbé DE St. REAL! What a wise and judicious writer is the abbé DE VERTOT! Can the learned author of the life of Julian be refused the glory, of having worthily trod in their steps?

You are in the case of PLUTARCH and all the historians. Whether the facts you write
are

are wholly and every where true, that is the business of others: your task will be to present them in a light that may illuminate your readers, and form them to virtue. GUICHARDIN, so praise-worthy in other respects, seems to me blameable in this: as he thought men essentially bad, he did not propose to render them better. He imputes all the actions of those whose history he writes to false principles: "Which makes me think, says MONTAGNE, that he has some relish of vice, and perhaps has chanced to estimate others by himself." Those who think too badly of humanity, ought not to expect to be well thought of themselves. HOBBS, by letting too much of his prejudice against men in general appear, has only prejudiced his readers against himself.

History is one of those parts of literature which we have cultivated the most, either from the particular taste of our writers, or their generous view to the public utility. The English, on the contrary, have employ'd themselves least in this branch of learning. It is surprising, that having produced so many other fine works, and being so jealous of the glory of their nation, they have taken so little care to write the memorable facts of it. History, at the first view, seems to offer only a collection of the crimes and misfortunes of mankind. Those great events, those revolutions of empires, which interest us so much in the reading of them, were

were in fact the misfortunes of the people who thereby became so famous. The English may have been afraid that a faithful recital of what has happened among them, and a true picture of their manners, would in many respects have given the lye to those extravagant elogies they sometimes make upon the wisdom of the government, and the character of the people of their isle. POLYDORE VIRGIL was the first that wrote a history of England: and except the French, except RAPIN DE THOYRAS, the English have not yet any general history of their nation, that * deserves to be read. Among the authors that have written the events of their own times, chancellor CLARENDON and dr. BURNET are almost the only ones that deserve to be transmitted to posterity, and they are both accused of partiality. Without entering into a discussion of their merits, it appears to me that the second has endeavoured less than the first “to inspire those who read him with a desire of becoming better.”† The one is often a courtly prelate only: the other is always a great man.

Let us view history on the side of her true object, as the most sure school of policy and morality. The misfortunes of others are the best lessons we can receive; they are so many instructions proper to teach us prudence and

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dex-

* This reproach is now in a fair way of being removed by the labours of mr. CARTE and mr. GUTHRIE.

† Burnet's preface.

dexterity. Human wisdom is only the fruit of experience, and the English have too much neglected a part so essential to the formation of their manners. On the other hand, they are commendable in not having, like us, the bad taste to write such a number of facts that are of no concern to the publick. There is not to be found among them a great number of those private memoirs, of which the author is the principal hero, and which are oftener dictated by a desire of being distinguished in the publick, than by any design of becoming useful. Those among them who have distinguished themselves by great actions, have been content to do them, disdaining to blazon them with their pen. The French are very far from being so modest in what personally regards themselves: he that has had the command of an army, or the management of a few negotiations, gives the world voluntarily his memoirs, that is to say his panegyrick, and sometimes the work of his vanity becomes the monument of his meaness of heart. It must be owned, however, that even those among us who have written only to illustrate their own names, have also frequently contributed to the public utility. General history may extract a great deal of assistance from these particular memoirs. Such, among others, are those of the cardinal DE RETZ. Besides, if we have our Rabutins and Jollys, we have also our Sullys and Commynes.

Most

Most of the Greek and Roman histories were written by those who were at the head of affairs, or had a principal part in them: but we Frenchmen, if we except PHILIP DE COMMINES, have not followed the wise example of those antient historians. SALLUST scarcely mentions himself. CÆSAR, in his commentaries, appears only by his great actions. Among us, every one writes the history of his life: but here in England they do not even write the history of their nation. Among these people, where those who fill up the highest characters have rarely the ambition to publish their memoirs, it must seem extraordinary that a * comedian of our days has had the vanity to cause the important circumstances of his own life to be printed. This fact ought to be placed among the singularities of the country: as to the author, I leave the English to fix him in the rank of merit he deserves.

The almost general taste of the English for the mathematicks is perhaps the cause of the little application they give to history. They have not literally followed the councils of chancellor BACON: history is one of the essential parts which he so strongly recommends in his work, on account of the benefit it may be of both to the physical and moral good of mankind. MONTAGNE, M. DE THOU, and DESCARTES are philosophers of a different kind, who having every one in his way

* Cibber.

contributed to enlighten their age, and all concur'd to aim at the general but, the advantage of society, do equally deserve the glorious title of preceptors of the human species. Thus BACON would have us, according to our different faculties, which are memory, imagination, and reason, cultivate the sciences that have relation to them, and apply ourselves to know the will of the creator; whether by searching into the wonders of nature, or into the course of events that his providence has been pleased to permit; the chain of which can astonish only those minds; that are proud enough to think themselves capable to judge of supreme wisdom.

Perhaps it is difficult to cultivate with success both history and philosophy. It seems as if the study of things excluded that of facts. Tho' they are both equally subordinate to reason, the bounds of the mind are such, that he who is busied in abstract sciences, is sensible only of the combination of ideas which his calculations present. One would almost fancy that those who are called geometricians are incapable of thinking without algebra. The great vogue that geometry now has in France may perhaps threaten us with the same inconveniences that she has brought into England. Calculation often makes genius frigid, and gives nothing in the room of the fire it takes away. It has been a saying of long standing, that geometry

try rectifies only those minds that were before right.

It is with some different sciences as with different tastes; they mutually exclude each other. Those who apply themselves to search the wonders of nature, put too little value upon knowledge of any other kind. They are no more sensible to the graces of a work of wit, than a virtuoso in cockle-shells is to the beauty of a picture. I do not speak here of some extraordinary men, whom nature has been pleased to favour, and who strew flowers of their own over the dryness of the most abstracted matters. There is no consequence to be drawn from
a FONTENELLE.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXXV.

To his grace the duke of NIVernois.

*Character and censure of the poem of Leonidas.
A beautiful passage in that poem.*

LONDON, &c.

My lord duke,

BEFORE the illustrious author of the
Henriade, no Frenchman had ever
P 3 raise

raised himself to the sublime of epic poesy. Those who had dared to try that ambitious flight, being destitute of the wings of genius, had too much trusted in those which they borrowed from art. The flight they took served only to render their fall the more remarkable.

Whatever noise the poem of Leonidas has made in England, the author has not been more happy than our countrymen. This work is one of those, which, owing their success to the intrigues of a party only, are doom'd to perish almost at the time they make their appearance. Your curiosity is at present excited by it: but if it should ever be translated into our language, it will not answer your expectation.

In this country, even more than in ours, the fate of a book often depends upon those who protect it. *Paradise lost*, which is at present the honour of the English Parnassus, was not known in the author's life time. He had no friends but those of CROMWELL, whose views were more to subdue their country than to make arts flourish. It was MR. ADDISON that drew MILTON out of the oblivion which his party had caused him to fall into in the reign of CHARLES II.

When I came to London the author of Leonidas was in the highest reputation; but he owes it more to the choice than the execution of his subject. He cannot be too much applauded for having endeavoured to
inspire

inspire his countrymen with patriotism, and zeal for liberty: but he has not been altogether so happy in the means he pitch'd upon for this purpose, as he was wise in the end proposed.

However, the lords CARTERET, CHESTERFIELD, and BATHURST, mr. PULTENEY, sir WILLIAM WINDHAM, and in short all those that were called by some the partisans of liberty, and by others, the enemies of the minister, proposed to procure for the author a fortune that should be durable, in case his poem was not so. Leonidas passed for some time for a poem worthy of the great MILTON. Those who were no judges fell in with the common cry, and persuaded themselves that it was their own fault, if the reading of this new master-piece did not give them pleasure. Nay, very few had even the courage to own they were not pleased. The sale was great and sudden, and the author made * 12,000 pounds sterling of his work. Soon after this eminent success procured him a very advantageous marriage; a circumstance that among us is without example. But it would be deceiving one's self to take this for a proof of the taste for arts that prevails in England, when in fact it was only the spirit of a party. Here are poets that ought to have been married before mr. GLOVER.

P 4

I shall

* I think this must needs be a great mistake.

I shall not undertake to give you an idea of the fable of this poem, because in truth there is no imagination in it. It is only a gazette, equally languid and circumstantial, of an event that happen'd 2000 years ago, and which affects more in the simple narrative of the historian than when adorned with all the flowers of the poet. But to do the author justice, I must not conceal from you that there are in it some beautiful passages. Such is the following panegyric upon liberty.

All bounteous nature! thy impartial laws
To no selected race of men confine
The sense of glory, fortitude, and all
The nobler passions, which inspire the mind,
And render life illustrious. These thou
Even plant'st
In ev'ry soil. But freedom, like the sun,
Must warm the gen'rous seeds. By her alone
They bloom and flourish; while Oppression
blasts
The tender virtues: hence a spurious growth,
False honour, savage valour taint the soul,
And wild ambition: hence rapacious pow'r
The ravag'd earth unpeoples, and the brave,
A feast for dogs, bestrew th' infanguin'd
plain.

LEONIDAS book IV. verse 337, &c.

This

This poem had deserved a part of the success it met with, if a great many such passages could have been found in it: but if there are some flowers, it is not sufficient to say they are very scarce; since it must be owned, that large barren desarts are to be travers'd, in order to come at them. LEONIDAS disgusts its readers more than it inspires them with a love of liberty: there is enough to tire the patience of those who desire to be amused while they are instructed; and perhaps, to read it through, a man had need have as much courage, as the author had to compose it. I should not have ventur'd to pass so severe a judgment, with so much assurance, if at present, now the warmth of its partisans is a little abated, it was not the opinion of all the people in England. The poem is fallen, and all the aid that dr. PEMBERTON can lend it, will never enable it to rise. In England a party, in France the intrigues of the women, may make a work fashionable: but, if it has not true merit, their efforts are vain. The publick soon open their eyes, and reduce it to its true value. How many times have we seen the women draw a crowd of spectators after a theatrical piece, and, what we cannot confess but with shame, after a sermon, where we ought to be auditors only! At Paris, every author, who can secure the friendship of a dozen fashionable ladies, may be sure to make a great deal of noise: And this is no difficult thing neither, because those ladies have no other way of keeping up their
own

own reputation, but by labouring continually to establish that of their parties. But there will never be an author esteem'd by the publick, except he that has written works truly estimable.

I have the honour to be,

My lord,

Your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXXVI.

To the Marquis of LOMELLINI.

Character of prince CANTEMIR. Reflections on the difference between a man of business and a man of study. Rarity of an aptitude for both in the same person. A mean letter of lord BACON to king JAMES I.

LONDON, &c.

MY LORD,

THE sentiments which my lord WALDEGRAVE has inspired you with in my favour, can be owing to nothing but his lordship's goodness : but difficult as it is for me to justify his recommendation, I would be ready to testify to you, how agreeably I am flatter'd by it. I must not, however, yet think
of

of turning my eyes towards France : my mission is not fulfilled. I will not tell you that I shall stay here as long as I can find any thing to learn ; that would, perhaps, be engaging for my whole life : I am only resolved, not to leave England, till I have derived some fruit from those informations which I came hither to seek.

You will speedily see at Paris, the best qualified man in the world to give you all the lights that you ask of me concerning this country : I mean prince CANTEMIR, whom his court has just nominated ambassador to that of France. The English, who are so knowing in merit, regard him as one of those foreign ministers, who have the most of it ; and I, who have the honour to be frequently in his company, dare pronounce before-hand that he and you will very soon be friends. You have both the same taste. With as much capacity to distinguish himself in the sciences, as to negotiate the greatest affairs of Europe ; he does not disdain to associate the muses with politicks. He is the first man that has wrote Russian verses, being now actually employed in imitating some of the satires of HORACE and DESPREAUX, adapted to the manners of his own nation. Thus in the occupations of his choice, as well as in those which duty prescribes him, he never loses sight of his country's advantage.

Nature has granted to him, as well as to you, that gift of which she is the most sparing ; I mean

mean that universal genius, which is equally proper for every thing. How much soever the world is prejudiced in favour of men of letters, experience has demonstrated, that very few of them are capable of great affairs. The spirit of contemplation, which is peculiar to them, deprives them of that activity, which is necessary in business of state. Some will not apply to it; others are not capable of the necessary application: in a word, they are more proper to instruct men, than to conduct them. The little care that most of them take of their own private affairs, is but a too sure indication how little they are turned for the affairs of government.

It is a kind of philosophical indolence that induces the learned man to shut himself up in his closet, in order to meditate; and he who has spent a part of his life in this manner, becomes almost incapable of any other occupation: he cannot find charms enough in new objects to attract his whole attention. Though it be at the expence of our pride, we must honestly confess, that our mind acts as mechanically as any of our other faculties. When it has taken a certain turn, it is difficult to give it any other. The light a man has acquired illuminates him only in the particular road he has chosen; and when he would make a new proof of his strength, he finds himself constrained to acknowledge he has none, except in the way he has been used to exercise it. We owe all that we are to habitude.

This

The foreigner, who, upon his arrival at Paris, discovered his surprize, that Corneille was not admitted into the council of state, testified more his esteem for that great poet, than his knowledge of the human mind. If cardinal Richlieu had been capable of writing the Cid, he had not, perhaps, render'd his ministry so famous: men commonly excel in one part only, at the expence of another. The man who can write the history of a conspiracy, might not know how to defeat it. In politicks and morality, the practice and theory are things entirely different, and nothing is to be infer'd concerning actions, from the finest discourses. CORNEILLE, who in his Otho has so well unravelled all the stratagems and intrigues of courtiers, was the most simple man in the world in his own conduct. SALLUST, who with so much spirit stood up against the corruption of his age, was himself so little regular in his manners, that the censor was obliged to reprove him for his bad life in full senate.

England is the country in which men of learning have the most frequently risen to the first places in the state; but very far have they been from always answering to what the nation expected from them. Sir RICHARD STEELE was expell'd the House of Commons, as a seditious writer *. Mr. ADDISON, when secre-

* An Englishman, who knows what was the state of factions at that time, will hardly esteem this any reflection upon sir Richard.

secretary of state, did not support the reputation he had acquired by his writings. The glory of the great BACON was eclipsed in the office of high-chancellor, and the head of justice was not found innocent at the tribunal where he had so often presided. The House of Peers, of which he was the oracle, was forced to proscribe him, and to throw a blemish upon the name which is now so glorious in the republic of letters*. Probably the hands of this illustrious magistrate were not corrupted; but certainly his conduct was not irreproachable. If his heart was entirely pure, he had neither a mind vigilant enough to prevent his disgrace, nor a soul strong enough to support it. In a word, he appear'd to be a philosopher only in his writings. His fall is a proof of the weakness of humanity, even in those men who appear the greatest†. We have several letters of his extant that give pain to read them when they are compared with his other writings. That of which I send you a translation may suffice to give you an idea of the rest. If he inspires with compassion, he does it

* By the sentence of the House of Peers he was condemned to pay a fine of 40,000 l. and to be imprison'd in the Tower during the king's pleasure. He was also declar'd incapable of any office, place, or employ, &c.

† If parts allure thee, think how BACON shin'd,
The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind.

Pope.

it at the expence of his courage. The confession that he is constrained to make, justifies the prosecution of his enemies. It gives me concern to see those who in certain respects do so much honour to human nature, on other occasions subject to weakneses that degrade it, or to vices that dishonour it.

I have the honour to be,

My lord, your most humble, &c.

A letter of chancellor BACON to king JAMES the first.

It may please your most excellent majesty,

“ **T**ime hath been, when I have brought
 “ unto you * *Gemitum columbæ* from
 “ others ; now I bring it for myself. I fly
 “ unto your majesty, with the wings of a
 “ dove, which once within these seven days,
 “ I thought would have carried me a higher
 “ flight. When I enter into myself, I find
 “ not the materials of such a tempest as is
 “ come upon me. I have been (as your
 “ majesty knoweth best) never author of
 “ any immoderate counsel, but always de-
 “ fired to have things carried † *suavibus*
 “ *modis*. I have been no avaricious op-
 “ pressor

* The mourning of a dove.
 hand.

† With a gentle

“ preffor of the people. I have been no
 “ haughty, or intolerable, or hateful man,
 “ in my conversation or carriage: I have in-
 “ herited no hatred from my father, but am
 “ a good patriot born. Whence should this
 “ be? For these are the things that use to
 “ raise dislikes abroad.

“ For the House of Commons, I began
 “ my credit there, and now it must be the
 “ place of the sepulture thereof; and yet in
 “ this parliament, upon the message touch-
 “ ing religion, the old love reviv’d, and they
 “ said, I was the same man still, only ho-
 “ nesty was turn’d into honour.

“ For the Upper-house, even within these
 “ days, before these troubles, they seem’d as
 “ to take me into their arms, finding in me
 “ ingenuity, which they took to be the
 “ true streight-line of nobleness, without
 “ any crookes or angles.

“ And for the briberies and gifts, where-
 “ with I am charged, when the book of
 “ hearts shall be opened, I hope, I shall
 “ not be found to have the troubled foun-
 “ tain of a corrupt heart, in a depraved ha-
 “ bit of taking rewards to pervert justice;
 “ howsoever I may be frail, and partake of
 “ the abuses of the times.*

“ And

* “ His principal fault, says mr. Addison, seems to
 “ have been an excess of that virtue which covers a
 “ multitude of faults. He shew’d so much indulgence
 “ to his servants, who made a bad use of it, that it
 “ occasion’d

“ And therefore, I am resolv’d, when I
 “ come to my answer, not to trick my in-
 “ nocency, (as I writ to the lords) by ca-
 “ villations, or voidances; but to speak to
 “ them the language, that my heart speak-
 “ eth to me, in excusing, extenuating, or
 “ ingenuously confessing: praying to God to
 “ give me the grace to see the bottom of my
 “ faults, and that no hardness of heart do
 “ steal upon me, under shew of more neat-
 “ ness of conscience, than is cause. But not
 “ to trouble your majesty any longer, crav-
 “ ing pardon for this long mourning letter;
 “ that which I thirst after, as the hart after
 “ the streams, is, that I may know, by my
 “ matchless friend * that presenteth to you this
 “ letter, your majesty’s heart (which is an
 “ abyffus of goodness as I am an abyffus of
 “ misery) towards me. I have been ever
 “ your man, and counted myself but an
 “ usufructuary of myself, the property be-
 “ ing yours. And now making myself an
 “ oblation to do with me as may best con-
 “ duce to the honour of your justice, the
 “ honour of your mercy, and the use of
 “ your service, resting as clay in your ma-
 “ jesty’s gracious hands,

Fr. St. Alban, Canc.

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“ occasion’d him to lose his riches and his honours,
 “ which a long course of merit had enabled him to ac-
 “ quire.”

* The marquis of Buckingham.



LETTER LXXVII.

To the Abbé SALLIER.

The Abbé praised for his earnest desire to become acquainted with English literature. Censure of M. MURALT. The English great plagiaries, particularly with regard to plays. SHADWELL, DRYDEN, CONGREVE, FIELDING, ADDISON, lord SHAFTESBURY, &c.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

I Have directed for you to mr. SMITH of Boulogne the new edition of the celebrated M. DE MOIVRE's book upon *the doctrine of chances*. 'Tis a present that he begs you to accept as a testimony of his friendship, and a tribute of his esteem. I send you at the same time a list of his other works, which he has presented to me. I will cause enquiry to be made after the different books of geometry which you desire of me, and as soon as I can get them together, you shall receive them by the same way. I perceive you do not content yourself with the conversation of HOMER and PLATO; you must

must get acquainted also with NEWTON and CLARKE: after having made yourself a master in all languages, you aim farther at grasping all the sciences. It is happy to have no bounds to one's knowledge, except those which nature has prescribed to the human understanding.

Your zeal for literature, and the pains you take to augment continually the king's library, which is entrusted to your care, are equally worthy of praise. The English erudition is a new river, if I may use the expression, the riches of which you are desirous to turn into that immense ocean of literature. You have already placed there the immortal works of the most celebrated geometricians. The English have a prodigious number of excellent books in all the parts of learning that regard natural philosophy, and particularly in medicine, politics, upon commerce and husbandry. They have writ much, and with great success. Good sense, which is the characteristic of the nation, has determined most of their authors to make that use of their understanding which is most profitable to society. They who have written books of entertainment are much fewer in number, and have been less fortunate. Here are very few books of this kind, that deserve to be read, but what are already known to us. This is a point they will not dispute with you, as they have wherewithal to be fully revenged upon us

in other respects. It is not their interest alone, but reason itself, that makes them look on the most essential parts of the understanding, as those that are most honourable.

The ingenious author of *the letters concerning the English and French* * has been reproach'd, because they say he is more amusing than instructive. Tho' he was without prejudice, his judgments are not without partiality: his own particular taste was the same to him as prejudices are to others: he may be said to have had a French spirit, but an English heart. It would not be difficult to convict him of an error in more than one point; and particularly when, instead of examining things himself, as he was very capable of doing, he trusts only to hearsay. An exact writer ought not to be positive upon such suspicious evidence. All men are jealous of the glory of their nation; and to rely upon the English for what regards the interest and honour of their country, is not to make the people known, but to adopt their prejudices.

The author of those letters remarks, that among the English writers, of whom in all appearance he had no great knowledge, there are fewer plagiaries than among those of other nations. "Thefts, says he, they
" assure us are less frequent amongst them
" than among other people, except in what
" regards

* M. MURALT.

“ regards the theatre, which is a trifle.” Nothing is more opposite to truth than this fact, which he reports after what he had been told: for no people commit robberies of this kind with more assurance than the English. The author himself, without thinking of it, shews by this compliment that they are as great thieves as it is possible to be. In works of theology or law surely they would not borrow from us! 'Tis only in compositions of pure wit and imagination, that we are worth their plundering. As to what regards the abstract sciences, and all those which depend upon calculation and experiment, as geometry, astronomy, &c. the English are so rich themselves, that they have no need to adorn themselves with the spoils of others. In these sciences they have the advantage over all the people of Europe. Besides, the discoveries that are made, in what country soever it may be, are soon known; and it is difficult for any man but the true author to gain any honour from them. If our academicks have made some new discoveries upon the electricity of bodies, can they rob the English philosophers of the glory of having first perceived a virtue that was not before known in matter? The memoirs of the academies, and the journals of learned men, give faithful accounts of every new thing found in the sciences, and put every author in the way of vindicating publicly what belongs to him.

Tho' the theatre is indeed only a trifle in the eyes of a philosopher who is retired from the world, yet this trifle, as he calls it, deserves notice. If it be true, as Abbé du Bos says, in his excellent reflections upon poetry and painting, "That what constitutes a plagiarist is the giving the work of another as a man's own work," there are no writers in any country such plagiarists as most of the English theatrical authors*. Not to mention those who are in inferior reputation, Mr. CONGREVE owes part of his success to

Mo-

* Shadwell, in his preface to the *Impertinent Lovers*, a comedy which he took from Moliere's *Facheux*, expresses himself thus: "I confess my theft ingenuously, and am ashamed of it, tho' I have before my eyes the example of some who never yet wrote a play, of which they did not steal the greatest part, and who (like men so accustomed to lie that they at last believe themselves) make the custom of thieving so habitual to them, that they look upon what they steal as their own goods; which is so mean and base, that I cannot forbear thinking that he who thus uses himself to steal the wit of others, would rob them of any thing else if he could do it with security." By this rule Shadwell himself, who makes so ingenuous a confession, was not a man to be trusted with one's purse. In his other works, where he owns nothing of the matter, he is as great a plagiarist as any of those whom he reproaches. Dryden himself, a writer who practised it greatly, is continually crying out against plundering! "But such is the character of the authors of our age, (says he in his prologue to *Albumazar*) that they make whole plays, and yet scarcely write a word; and in this anarchy of wit, which they steal every-where, they call their own goods, what is only their booty."

MOLIERE, from whom he has borrowed several of his characters. After all the art he has employ'd to accommodate them to the taste of his nation, the English disguise does not hinder their being known. In one of his pieces may be seen the coquet of the *Misanthrope*; in another, he copies the most happy strokes of the *Tartuffe* *. Sometimes he takes whole scenes, which he translates verbatim only; as that of M. DIMANCHE in the *Festin de Pierre* †. Yet he never, in any one of his pieces, mentions either the French theatre, or MOLIERE. More reasonable indeed than the common writers,

Q 4

who

* *The Way of the World*.

† *The Double Dealer*. In this play Maskwell is Moliere's *Tartuffe*, dress'd in the English manner, and joining to the wickedness of that impostor, all the tricks and stratagems of Scapin. Lady Froth is the Philaminte of the *Femmes Savantes*; Brisk is the Trifetin, and Cynthia the Henriette. The only difference in the English scenes is, that the conversation turns upon Aristotle, Horace, father Rapin, and madame Dacier, instead of the moon and the stars. There is also a scene in which madame Pliant, like the Belise of Moliere, refuses the homage that is not offer'd her, and is angry with Melfort for discovering a passion towards her, of which he does not say a word. The tenth scene of the third act is only a copy of the scene of Scandal in the *Misanthrope*. Mr. Fielding has lately a little better disguis'd it in the third act of his comedy call'd *Love in several masks*, the idea of which was furnish'd by Moliere. The first scene in the first act of the same author's *Temple Beau* is taken from the third act of the *Misanthrope*, where the same discourse passes between Arsinoe and Celimene.

who translate wretchedly, or plunder shamefully our best plays, and afterwards treat RACINE as a mere pedant, and MOLIERE as a trifling genius.

You are acquainted, sir, with mr. ADDISON's Cato, one of those tragedies that do most honour to the English stage: I ask you honestly if the most striking scene of that play, where DECIUS the ambassador of Cæsar reasons with Cato, is not a copy of that beautiful scene of CORNEILLE, in which Sertorius, being in the same circumstances as the English Cato, receives Pompey, the ambassador from Sylla, almost in the same manner.

Rome is no more in Rome, but all her state
Is where I am -----

This verse * contains in substance all the spirit that has been transfus'd out of the French scene into the English. It should seem that mr. ADDISON ought to have mentioned the author whom he has so happily imitated, and to whom he owes the grandure and dignity with which he makes all his characters express themselves: for it must be allow'd that this tragedy is less the production of his genius, than the effect of his taste, and the fruit of his reflections. He had not so well succeeded but by melting together, if I may use that expression, several pieces of CORNEILLE.

* It is in French but a single verse.

Rome n'est plus dans Rome, elle est toute ou je suis.

NEILLE. But the English value themselves upon their genius, and blush to own that they owe any thing to us. And yet a good sizeable volume might be made of the titles only of those works which they have translated or imitated from French authors, and imposed them upon their own countrymen for originals.

M. COSTE, who merited so well of the republick of letters, and who upon all subjects is acknowledged to be a man so worthy of credit, told me one day that the earl of SHAFTESBURY having read to him one of his pieces, he blamed his lordship for not having owned the obligations he had to the French authors on certain accounts, nor rendered them all the justice due to them on others. The earl promised to repair this fault in a preface, which in fact he some time afterwards read to his friend. The treatise soon after this appeared in print, but without any preface. M. COSTE demanded the reason, and the earl told him that he did not dare to publish it, for fear of setting his whole nation against him. As great a philosopher as this Englishman was, he did not appear enough so on this occasion.

There are in truth among them some modern tragedies, in which the authors are not at all indebted to us: and they have consequently too much the air of originals not to be easily known. Such is that wherein the heroine, after having been the mistress of a king,

king, is in punishment reduced to beg her bread from door to door without relief, and dies at last, after having been three days without eating, in the arms of her husband, who comes on purpose to pardon her infidelity *. Such are those in which a robber is the hero, and the catastrophe passes at a gibbet †: or those in which the personages do nothing but sing, drink, and dance for the four first acts; but in the fifth are all murder'd by the author to finish his piece ‡.

I confess, and the interest and honour of my country will not suffer me to disguise the truth, that some of our authors have practised the same kind of theft, which I take the liberty to censure in those of another nation. We have writers who have transplanted into their plays very happy scenes from the English stage, and this too without mentioning the authors they have borrow'd from. In all appearance they thought they had a right to make reprisals; but however that be, the practice is neither antient nor common upon our stage. Those who have had the honour to fall into it have often been happy imitators, but never negligent ungrateful plagiaries.

I add

* The tragedy of *Jane Shore*. In one of their plays Caius Marius is represented as persecuted by hunger and thirst as much as by Sylla.

† *The London Merchant*.

‡ See a tragedy of mr. Porter's call'd *The Villain*.

I add to this letter a short piece, which comes in exactly to our purpose. It fell into my hands by chance. Artifice was made use of to get a copy of it from the manuscript of an author who is here in reputation as a theatrical poet, and whose name discretion does not permit me to mention.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.

THE SUPPLEMENT OF GENIUS: *or, the art of composing dramatic poems, as it has been practised by many celebrated authors of the English theatre* *.

THIS method has one considerable advantage over all others; which is, that it enables an author to succeed equally in comedy and tragedy: it supplies the place of talents in those who would write in either kind, and gives invention to those who have it not, either in respect to the imagination, or the disposition of the fable.

If,

* *As this work was in manuscript when the Abbé translated it, we suppose it remains so at present: for we have not been able to hear of anything like it in print; and were therefore obliged to translate it back from the French. It is an irony upon the English poets, who have stolen from the French, and at the same time abused the authors they stole from, or endeavour'd to conceal the theft.*

If, for example, it comes in your head that you will write a tragedy, it is needless to puzzle your brains in search of some new subject, or in ranging it according to the rules of ARISTOTLE. Rules are nothing at all to you: they were made only for the dull; and can serve no purpose but to damp the genius of those who submit to them. Take only one of CORNEILLE'S or RACINE'S tragedies, which you may like best, and change the title and the names of the persons: call Bajazet the Sultana; Iphigenia, the Victim; or make a Constantine of Mithridates (*a*). You may preserve the play as a foundation whereon to build your edifice. "The French furnish the materials, but we
" are

(*a*) In the English tragedy which bears this title, the scene wherein Constantine surprises Fausta's secret is only a translation of the scene wherein Mithridates deceives Monimia.

Mr. Cibber has brought the *Cid* upon the English stage under the name of the *Heroic Daughter*. He confesses that his piece is only an imitation of Corneille's; but tho' he had to guide him the critique of the French academy, which he quotes in his preface, most of the alterations he has made serve only to make the scenes more languid. The English poet applauds himself much for having raised Ximene's father, that she might marry Rodriguez without hurting her honour, and did not consider that by that means he took away all that was interesting in the subject. Thus a common painter, who attempts to touch over the work of a great master, substitutes in the room of some slight faults, which a master himself despises, much greater that did not perceive, and in fact spoils one of Raphael's designs while he believes he corrects it.

“ are the architects, and we only know how
“ to make the proper use of them. Like
“ their language, their genius is frivolous
“ and trifling, in comparison of the English
“ (b).”

You may let the first act remain just the same as you found it in your original, without adding any thing of your own invention: but as the French are content to be natural in their narratives, and are too simple for us, you should take care to work up your relations, and swell them as much as you are able. For this purpose you must find in SHAKESPEAR the quantity of bold and strong epithets that you may have occasion for, and employ two in every line, which is the common proportion. The French verses are very bad models; they are cold enough to freeze one: ours, on the contrary, are like thunder, big with fire, noise, and pomp. In all kinds of writing we are at this time superior to the French, “ and can as easily
“ conquer them with our pens, as our an-
“ cestors conquer’d them with their swords
“ (c).

You

(b) These are the expressions of some English dramatical author, but I cannot remember where I read them. I am sorry the author of *this Method* has not taken care to support by quotations all the extraordinary things he advances. Perhaps it was because he thought them too notorious. I will endeavour to supply this by some notes, that I have myself made in reading the English plays,

(c) Dryden’s *Essay of dramatic poeſie*.

You should give to every king that you introduce into your play two or three dozen of guards, to raise the grandure and dignity of their characters, which, without this invention, do not sufficiently strike even in the plays of CORNEILLE himself. He says in the examination of his Cid, that he did not dare to bring in don Diego in the third act attended by his friends, for fear the players should make use of the candle-snuffers on that occasion, who would not know how to look their parts: but our candle-snuffers are more considerable than those of our neighbours, and are as much used to represent princes or ministers in a council, as to perform their parts in a mob or a popular commotion. Nothing better shews the meanness of the French stage than to see so great an author commit such an absurdity, in order to accommodate his piece to the theatre (*d*). Some modern authors of that nation have wisely perceived the error of the masters of their predecessors, and begin herein to follow our example, giving more grandure to their characters, and more elevation to their pieces. To an heir of a throne you should give twelve guards, and to a common prince at least six. For a queen, or a princess of the blood, four attendants will suffice; one to answer her, or only simply to hear her, and the other three to support her in case you think proper to let her fall into a fit

(*d*) Preface to the *Heroic Daughter*.

fit in any one of your scenes. To every queen and princess you must give a little page, who is not to leave her throughout the play, being as essential to the dignity of these characters, as necessary to the actresses who perform them. This little mute must be very active: he is a kind of shadow to the heroine of the stage, following her motions, and, what is more, taking care to put her train in order at every step she makes. Our women bestir themselves mightily in a passion, and there would be danger, as they move hastily backwards and forwards, that the enormous length of these tails might throw them down but for this precaution: and an accident of that kind would infallibly interrupt the business.

As it is advantageous to prepare early the minds of the spectators for the subject of their emotion, if you distrust your first act, close it with a concert of musick, which will supply the want of pathetic in the expressions (e).

You

(e) Mr. Congreve's *Mourning Bride* begins with a concerto. The fifth act of the *Fair Penitent* sets out with musick and frightful ditties. The incantations of the priests of Thor and Woden, who are preparing for their horrible sacrifices, open the fourth act of the *Royal Convert*. In the first act of *Theodosius* there is a christening: in the third, Athenais is going to receive the sacrament of confirmation, after which a pastoral is sung: in the fourth, two little Cupids sing while Theodosius is asleep: in the fifth Athenais, who has poison'd herself,

You may open your second act by a change of the scene, which shall present the spectator with some theatrical decoration: for example, the grot of a magician employ'd in conjuring of demons, (f) or the inside of a temple, where all the people are attending to the ceremonies of their priests (g). For the first you should consult our own SHAKESPEAR, the greatest man in the world for conjuration and magick; for the second, you may have recourse to QUI-NAULT's operas. You may moreover add to your piece two or three persons of your own invention, to double the intrigue, and more embarrass the principal action, which is often faulty in the French authors thro' its too much simplicity. In this respect you must imitate the Spanish taste, and, if you understand their language, CALDERON will afford you great assistance. Do not torment your mind to make them talk and act consistently thro' the whole play: when the character of a hero is undecided, he holds the spectators in the greater perplexity: if he is vicious and virtuous both together, if in one scene he is different from what he had ap-

herself, will have singing still while the poison operates. This tragedy is all taken from the romance of Pharamond. There are songs in a great many other English tragedies, too numerous to quote. See the *Ambitious Stepmother*, *Tyrannic Love*, *The Fatal Marriage*, &c.

(f) *Montezuma*, lately translated into French.

(g) *Cleomenes*, act iii.

appear'd in another (*b*), it will be so much the more easy for you to take that part at last which will be most convenient to extricate yourself from the affair.

With the liberty that you have of changing the scene as often as you please, and transporting it where you think proper, it will be easy for you to bring in these new actors when and how you chuse (*i*). It is even unnecessary to mention them in the first act; they will so much the more excite curiosity, as the audience are ignorant whence they came, or what is their business.

As uniformity is always a fault among us, in order to break it, it will not be amiss to make a buffoon of one of those adventitious persons. Our spectators do not like to be too long employed on the same sentiment; they must laugh and cry alternately, and sometimes in the same instant, in order to be pleased. The French, for want of this resource,

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source,

(*b*) *Rollo, Melanthius, King and no King*, by Fletcher.

(*i*) In Shakespear's *Anthony and Cleopatra* the scene extends as far as the limits of the Roman empire. In the second act the first scene is in Sicily, the second at Rome, the third at Alexandria, the fourth upon the coasts of Italy near Misenum, and the fifth in young Pompey's gallies. The poet thus, in the twinkling of an eye, carries you from one extremity of the world to the other. The English dramatic poets have but too much imitated him in this respect: the examples of it are so well known, that it would be superfluous to quote them.

source (*k*), “ and from too much fear of
“ making us laugh, often put us to sleep.”

Upon the English theatre it is necessary to
be more bold. You must put the buskin up-
on one foot, and the sock upon the other.
A scene of drollery, as often as possible,
should succeed one that is pathetic (*l*).

“ We, who are a more fullen people, come
“ to be diverted at our plays; but the French,
“ who are of an airy and gay temper, come
“ thither to make themselves more serious.

“ It is to the honour of our nation that we
“ have invented, augmented, and perfected
“ this more agreeable manner of writing for
“ the stage, than any other known nation
“ antient or modern, and this is in our tra-
“ gi-comedy (*m*).” It is the invariable prac-

tice of SHAKESPEAR, and his rival BEN
JOHNSON (*n*), who have been successfully
followed therein by our greatest tragic poets,
as OTWAY, SOUTHERN, and others (*o*).
In imitation of these, you must take care

to

(*k*) Dryden.

(*l*) See the character of the Physician in the cele-
brated Ben Johnson's *Sejanus*.

(*m*) Dryden's essay of dramatic poesie:

(*n*) Shakespear's *Julius Cæsar*, *Hamlet*, &c. Ben
Johnson's *Sejanus*, *Cataline*, &c.

(*o*) Otway's *Venice preserv'd*, one of the most tragic
pieces on the English stage, is in every scene interrupted
by a comic instance of the most base and trivial kind.
Southern's Oroonoko and *Fatal Marriage* have the same
fault; which indeed is common to many English plays,
in which there are otherwise great beauties.

to change from verse to prose whenever you quit tragedy for comedy, and particularly in all dialogues between persons of mean rank; and in order to please with us, you must frequently sink into those mean scenes wherein the mob may know themselves.

With regard to the language suitable to each profession, and the humour proper for a porter, or any other considerable man among the populace, you must again consult the great masters and founders of our theatre (*p*); for of this the French have no notion. “ These burlesque scenes, intermix’d
 “ with tragedy, have the same effect on us
 “ as musick between the acts; they relieve
 “ us after we have been in great emotion
 “ (*q*). We are obliged to write them in prose, in order to make the different persons speak according to the dignity or baseness of their condition (*r*); and the play cannot but receive advantage from it, because it is the more varied.

Tho’ we have banish’d rhyme from our stage, we admit it still to adorn the finest parts of a scene; and, notwithstanding the

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repug-

(*p*) The modern authors have in this respect only copied Shakespear, Ben Johnson, and Fletcher.

(*q*) Dryden.

(*r*) The English plays that are half tragedy and half comedy, are writ partly in verse and partly in prose, as Oroonoko, &c. Even in the prose comedies the scenes of elevated sentiment are often written in verse. This mixture is to be met with in the most celebrated plays, as, The Plain Dealer, the Careless Husband, &c.

repugnance we have for rules of all kinds, it is an established rule with us in dramatic poesy to rhyme the last verses of every act. Thus, by some means or other, you must bring in some florid comparison, taken from the most delightful objects of nature, or some pompous description of a torrent or a hurricane, in emphatical and jingling verses (*s*), to give the more agreeable exit to the actor (*t*). Mr. ROWE, who knew so well what would have an effect upon our stage, in this manner puts an end to one of the most moving scenes of tenderness (*u*).

Oh Selima! thou hast restor'd my quiet:
The noble ardor of the war, with love
Returning, brightly burns within my breast,
And bids me be secure of all hereafter.
So cheers some pious faint a dying finner,
Who trembled at the thought of pains to
come,
With Heaven's forgiveness, and the hopes of
mercy:

At

(*s*) See the verses that end the third act of the Fair Penitent, the third act of Ulysses, and the last act of Venice preserv'd, &c.

(*t*) Mr. Addison gives this advice in the Spectator, No. 39, and has followed it in his Cato. Mr. Philips, who translated Racine's Andromache, has added at the end of the second and fourth acts, and in some other places, different comparisons of the same kind that Mr. Addison requires, dressed in as high-sounding verse as the English theatre allows of.

(*u*) Selina's exit in the first act of Tamerlane.

At length the tumult of his soul appeas'd,
 And ev'ry doubt and anxious scruple eas'd,
 Boldly he proves the dark, uncertain road;
 The peace, his holy comforter bestow'd,
 Guides and protects him, like a guardian god. }

These are the models you are to follow in finishing your scenes, and not the practice of the French theater, where the actors quit the stage as coldly as they come upon it, and where the poet is contented with only painting the passion, not having genius enough to embellish it with such brilliant strokes. If some beauties are to be found in the hero of their play, "they are the beauties of a statue, not those of a man, because they are not animated by the soul of poesy. Whatever the French can say or do, our men and our verses will always conquer them by their weight (*w*)."
 We imitate in this the authors of the Italian opera, who end all their scenes with airs.

The French authors have imposed on themselves the yoke of the unities of time, place, and action, and some even think it necessary to submit to that of being interested in their subject: but never lose your time upon such puerile observations: these rules only cool the imagination, to which you ought to give its full scope. Do not scruple, if it be necessary, to transport the

R 3

scene

(*w*) Dryden.

scene from Rome to Constantinople, or from London to Carolina. Never abridge yourself of the time necessary for unravelling your intrigue. If a week is not sufficient, take a fortnight, a month, or a year. “Tho’ such licences are faults, commit them boldly, because they suit the English genius (x).” Your comedies and tragedies are treats that you give the people: if the provisions that you set before them are to the taste of your guests, what have you to do with the rules of cookery? “I had rather, says MARTIAL, that my ragouts should please the guests than the cooks.”

It would not be amiss to close this act with a night scene. Prodiges in the heavens will then produce the greater effect, and the ghosts will inspire the more terror at their appearance. In order the better to keep up the semblance of probability, you must let Cæsar appear in his night-cap, and Oedipus in his (y) shirt. If you have so terrible a subject to handle as that of the vengeance for Laius’s murder, do not imitate the French, and rob the spectators of all the pathetick of the piece, by not exposing to their eyes the touching picture of the pestilence. The verses can give but a faint idea of it: you must enhance the horror by crowding the stage with dead bodies, by bringing on figures almost inanimated, who scarce can walk,

(x) Dedication to *Love Triumphant*.

(y) See the tragedies with those titles.

walk, and every moment increase the number of the corps that decorate your theatre (z). These are lofty scenes, which thro' they exist in nature, the French have not spirit enough to imitate.

In the third act you must deviate still more from your French original. Be sure to let one of our characters be killed, by what means is no matter, that you may have a ghost at your command for the two last acts: and above all, whatever death you may make choice of, do not deprive the judges of the upper gallery of the pleasure of seeing it represented (a). Our people are pleased with viewing the agonies and horrors of death. They have this taste in common with the antient Romans. They are accustomed to applaud the man who dies with a good grace, and a hero frequently finds the means to raise a laugh by bringing out his last sigh (b). It is the sight of blood that inspires terror in tragedy, and, whatever HORACE can say, nothing ought to be done out of the sight that may increase this passion. The French, in-

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stead

(z) See the English Oedipus.

(a) In the tragedy of Richard II, that king is assassinated upon the stage in the same manner as is related in the history. In the duke of Guise, the hero is stabb'd in view of the spectators. In Othello, you see the moor stifle his wife in her bed, &c. In Tamerlane, one of the most regular modern plays, Bajazet causes Monefes to be strangled upon the stage, &c.

(b) Imitations of this sort are commonly ridiculous in the poet, and always much more so in the actor.

stead of high-wrought tragedies, give us languishing elegies. If they reproach it as a fault in us to expose to the view of the spectators actions that are too cruel, this fault “is one of those which they have not the “spirit to commit (c).” Besides, it is sufficient that this custom is established upon our theatre; that is reason enough for conforming to it. You ought to maintain to yourself all the rights and privileges that were acquired by those who preceeded you. Observe how one of the zealous defenders of our stage expresses himself. “I look upon the “licences at present as the great charter of “dramatic poesy, and I am too good an “Englishman to lose what my ancestors “have won for me (d).”

It is in this act that, if you have two rival princesses, you must endeavour to paint all the rage which women give themselves up to in the violence of love, and the fury of hate. The delicacy of the French authors would here be ridiculous: they believe that a queen, tho’ jealous and provok’d, should preserve her dignity, even in the excess of her passion. Upon their theatre, Roxana enrag’d says scarce two words to the slave that carries off her lover; she dares not give herself up to transports of fury, even in the moment when there should be no reserve, for fear of infringing.

(c) Dryden.

(d) The same.

fringing the laws of French politeness. This dignity is absolutely contrary to nature, for the passions are the same in all human breasts. Jealousy reduces the greatest princesses to the same sentiments and tone of voice as common women, and a poet is obliged to paint all things according to truth. Imitate the judicious mr. DRYDEN, who, in such circumstances, makes Cleopatra and Octavia (e) scold like the fish-women of Billingsgate: "Because, as he very well expresses it, tho' " the one was a Roman, and the other a " queen, they were both women.-----The " French poets would not have suffer'd them " to have met, or if they had met, there " must only have pass'd betwixt them some " cold civilities, but no eagerness of repartee, " for fear of offending against the greatness " of their characters, and the modesty of " their sex. This objection I foresaw, and " at the same time contemned it (f)." In this he follow'd only the dictates of good sense, which should be prefer'd to French taste, and had before his eyes the example of SHAKESPEAR, who of all poets, antient or modern, was the most faithful to nature (g).

The

(e) In *All for Love, or the World well lost*, which, of all the dramatic works of that poet, is that wherein he has employ'd the most art. It is indeed one of the best English tragedies, and has been translated into France by the Abbé Prevot, under the title of *Pour & Contre*.

(f) Preface to the said play.

(g) See in the first part of Henry VI, the quarrel between the duke of Gloucester and cardinal Beaufort, and

The same must it be with your heroes: do not run the hazard of degrading their characters under pretence of enobling them, and take from your passion all its force with a view of making your language decent. Art only disguises nature, instead of adorning it. When scolding comes in your way, consider the eloquence of the heroes in the Iliad. Achilles, when enrag'd, talks like a chairman. Mr. ROWE, who profited by the reading of HOMER, has given us two scenes in the tragedy of Ulysses, that are master-pieces in this kind. In the first, Ulysses, who is not yet known, courageously retorts the scorn and brutality of the princes who are suitors to his wife, and is ready to come to fisticuffs with them, after the English manner (*b*). In the other, the quarrel between Telemachus and the king of Samos, by a gradation of ill language, swells so high that it costs the latter

that between queen Margaret and the dutchess of Gloucester.

In the second act of the Ambitious Stepmother there is a scene of the same kind between Memnon, Artaxerxes, and Artemisia.

I shall here set down another stroke of Shakespear's Fidelity to Nature, taken from the last act of King Henry V, where that monarch makes declaration of his love to the princess Catharine of France, whom he is to marry, in these words: " Shall not thou and I, be-
 " tween St. Dennis and St. George, compound a boy
 " half French, half English, that shall go to Constan-
 " tinople, and take the Turk by the beard? Shall we
 " not? What sayest thou, my fair Flower-de-luce? "

(*b*) Act I.

latter his life (i). Your choice of that which ought to be imitated in nature was unknown to the antient poets, and is equally unknown to ours: it is indeed only a frivolous distinction, imagin'd by tame authors, who, for want of invention, study what they call theatrical decency. “ In this nicety of manners
 “ does the excellency of French poetry consist: their heroes are the most civil people
 “ breathing; but their good breeding seldom
 “ extends to a word of sense: all their wit is
 “ in their ceremony: they want the genius
 “ which animates our stage; and therefore
 “ 'tis but necessary when they cannot please,
 “ that they should take care not to offend
 “ (k).”

In consequence of these principles, if you bring upon the stage a queen who has reason to complain of her husband's infidelity, let her not amuse herself with regretting the tenderness of her own passion, and mincing the plain matter of fact, which is the custom of all the French heroines, who are only so many prudes and lady Daintys. Let your more natural princess complain boldly of the robbery committed on her, and the many comfortless nights she is obliged to pass; let her reproach her perjur'd husband with his icy age and impotence. In this you will have the great mr. DRYDEN, or rather nature itself,

(i) Act iv.

(k) Dryden's preface to *All for Love*.

itself, for your model (*l*). Thus when he has made Aureng-zebe a mother-in-law out of RACINE's Phædra, he artfully corrects the faults of his original. Nourmahal, far from having that ridiculous horror of incest which distinguishes the French Phædra, far from being troubled with the least remorse, explains naturally whatsoever she thinks or desires (*m*). Our neighbours, who are so scrupulous and so cold, might judge her discourse to be often indecent and impudent, when all the while it is no more than natural, and, as such, preferable to the romantic sentiments which they give to all their characters. "In vain do we look for the Hippolitus of Euripides in that of RACINE: instead of the rough young hero, a mortal enemy of love, we find only monsieur HIPPOLITE (*n*);" as this poet, equally marvelous in his plays, and judicious in his criticisms, well observes.

The antient authors of the French theatre were not so delicate, nor so affected. GARNIER's Phædra seems to be written for us, and there is something very moving in the last scene of the 3d act: but the character of Phædra is far from being every where so strong and well supported as that of Nourmahal. The advice to accuse Hippolitus comes

(*l*) Aureng-zebe, act ii.

(*m*) Act iii.

(*n*) Mr. DRYDEN speaks to this effect in his preface to *All for Love*. The Abbé by mistake quotes the preface of Aurengzebe, which has none.

comes from the nurse only: but in the English piece, the queen's passion for her husband's son is so violent, that she does not even see her own shame enough to blush at it, and so desperate, that not being able to obtain her desire of him, she endeavours to poison him. The morality of the French theatre is too rigid to suffer its authors to paint these great emotions of the passions. How can there be any fire in their scenes, when they are even forbid to introduce it? Mr. CIBBER, our poet laureat, and consequently the man who has most right to give us rules, after having so happily corrected the Cid, was forced to confess that what hindered his play from succeeding as well as that of the French poet, was not that it had fewer beauties, but because he had endeavoured to make all his characters even more virtuous than those of CORNEILLE. Few of our authors have fallen into this excess; for we take pleasure in seeing rogues of the first order represented. We Englishmen have such tender hearts, that whatever the criminals may be which are brought upon the stage, we are always ready to lament them, if they do but shew the least sign of repentance before they die. The criminals of a superior order, which are the ornament of our theatre, are unknown upon that of France. " And what hinders the French " authors from meddling with such great

(cha-

“ characters, is the narrowness of their genius (o).”

Mr. ROWE, to whom our theatre hath such great obligations, has given us in his *Ambitious Step-mother*, a scene of this kind, which, from the truth and justice wherewith he paints the uncontrollable passion of an old man, is a master-piece. Mirza is talking to Amestris in the most amorous manner; but impatient of losing his time in words only, he attempts, notwithstanding the weakness of his age, to make himself happy by force. He wearies himself in fruitless efforts; and the princess, in making her defence, gets the dagger from him, with which she gives him a mortal wound. Here is nature for you! Mirza speaks and acts like a passionate old man, and Amestris like a virtuous woman. This princess indeed, who has defended her honour with so much courage, is immediately punished for it. Orchanes comes in, and delivers her up to the old man, who, unable to dishonour her, has at least the consolation to be revenged, and to stab her likewise before he draws his last breath (p). This is one of those scenes, of which we have many upon our stage, wherein nature is represented in all her truth. If vice often triumphs, and virtue is unhappy, the imitation of manners is but so much the more faithful:

(o) Cibber's preface to his *Heroic Daughter*.

(p) *The Ambitious Stepmother*, act v.

ful: for thus do things commonly fall out in the world. A theatrical author may kill his villain in a state either of repentance or obduracy, just as it will answer best to make a variety in his play.

If your principal hero is overwhelmed under the weight of his misfortunes, you must have a couch brought in for him, or, if he likes it better, he may lie down upon the ground, while a song or two are sung to lull him to sleep: at least, you must have an interlude, or a dance in this act, to revive both his spirits, and those of the spectators (*q*). You may take examples for these from the ballads in the French operas (*r*), or from the tales of the fairies. Thus the ingenious author of *Tyrannic Love* causes a magician to evocate the dæmons Nakir and the well-beloved Damilkar, whom he orders to delight St. Catharine in a dream. Damilkar in songs invites her to love, while they dance round about her: Amariel, her guardian angel, descends at the sound of soft musick, with a flaming sword in his hand: the dæmons fly, and Amariel threatens Damilkar to chain him down

(*q*) In *Tamerlane*, Arpasia lies extended on a couch, while a song in praise of sleep is sung to put her asleep.

In the tragedy of *Nero*, Britannicus causes a song to be sung, in order to comfort him for the death of Octavia his sister.

In *All for Love*, Anthony, who has lost the empire of the world, calls for musick to alleviate his melancholy.

(*r*) In the *Indian Emperor*, or *Montezuma*, the Spaniards dance Sarabands with Castanets.

down fifty years under the earth, if he dares to come again, and interrupt the saint's repose. You may thus end your third act with some religious ceremonies, in which the priests sing and dance, and all the actors make up the chorus. By blending in this manner musick with declamation, tragedy with opera, sacred with prophane, angels with dæmons, you may give your play a variety, and a degree of perfection to which the French cannot attain.

The fourth act, in all probability, will for want of business be destitute of fire in the original you have chosen. In order to animate it, endeavour to bring on two battles, which you may model after the memorable battle of Azincourt by SHAKESPEAR (*s*), who is indeed the pattern for all the battles of the English stage. Spiritless criticks strive in vain to subject us under ARISTOTLE's poeticks: "The English genius claims liberty in every thing, and is above the rules of the anti-ents, which are too confined for our theatre. Tho' their models are regular, as one of our authors very well expresses it, they are too small and simple for English tragedy, which requires to be built in a more grand proportion (*t*)."

Next, to inspire your spectators with the more terror, you must darken your stage, represent some prodigies in the air, the heavens

(*s*) See his Henry V.

(*t*) Dryden.

in blood, two suns, aerial spirits fighting together, and the like (*u*). These decorations you must accompany with thunder and lightning, which add to the spectators affright, and have a wonderful effect upon our stage (*w*). Then you must make a spectre rise out of the ground, in a bloody shirt. The slain in the foregoing battles will furnish you with half a dozen inferior ghosts, which you may exhibit by way of attendants only on the principal sprite (*x*). For the politeness with which spirits expect to be treated, when you have occasion to make them explain the reasons of their appearance, the best author to consult is SHAKESPEAR: no man knew better than he how to give speech to an apparition.

To put an end to this act, you must bring your hero in victorious, with cannon firing, drums beating, and trumpets sounding. This military musick, and the sight of an army, which you must cause to pass in review over the stage, will agreeably relieve the weary

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(*u*) Sophonisba, act iii.

(*w*) Julius Cæsar.

(*x*) In the 4th act of Macbeth the shades of eight several kings pass in review across the stage.

In the English Oedipus the ghost of Laius appears accompanied with three others, and comes several times upon the stage.

The spirit of Sylla opens Ben Johnson's tragedy of Cataline, in a soliloquy of a hundred lines long. See also Montezuma, the conquest of Granada, &c.

spectator, who has been in too much emotion during the preceeding scenes (y).

If your piece turns upon some other hinge, and there be a princess desperately in love, who has lost in battle the sole object of her affections, it is natural that the excess of her grief should disorder her reason; and in that case you must bring her in mad upon the stage, dressed like a shepherdess, or how you please. You must make her dance and sing as much as you think proper, which will serve for an interlude to your fourth act. This happy invention we owe to SHAKESPEAR (z), and our best authors have imitated him therein with success (a). By such means the fecundity of the English genius has imagined a thousand resources to renew the pleasure of the spectator upon our stage, resources that are utterly unknown or forbid to the cold and more exact French. If CORNEILLE had not so scrupulously stuck to history, but had dar'd to imitate the liberty of some of our authors, Camilla, after the death of her dear

Curi-

(y) This is the custom of the English stage. See *Tamerm lane*, *Oroonoko*, &c.

(z) The death of Polonius, the father of Ophelia, makes her run mad. She comes upon the stage and sings and behaves in a manner to make one laugh. *Hamlet*, act iv.

(a) Otway and Southern, two of the greatest English tragic poets. In the fifth act of *Venice preserv'd*, after the scene of the scaffold, we are informed, to the tune of soft musick, that Belvidera, the wife of Jaffeir, is become mad. There is a scene something like it in the fifth act of the *Innocent Adultery*.

Curiatius, instead of delivering herself up to that rage which provokes her brother to commit a parricide, and obliges the poet to add a cold and languid act to his play, this Camilla, I say, who irritates Horatius by her imprecations, would have melted him to pity with her mad fooleries. Can any thing be more affecting than to see a beautiful young lady, whose misfortunes have turn'd her brain, and who can neither laugh without making you cry, nor cry without making you laugh? Such accidents are a consequence of the weakness of the sex, and our English fair prefer the moving disorder of these scenes to all that passion can inspire the most strong and pathetic. It is at these passages that they weep the most plentifully.

If the nature of your subject will permit, you may also remove the last scene of this act into a prison, and present your hero there loaded with irons, tormented with hunger, and ready to expire for want of nourishment (b).

But it is in the last act that you must employ all the resources of your genius, in order to astonish your spectators, and make them all tremble. Begin it by bringing your ghost once more upon the stage: this will renew the sentiments of terror; and to keep them alive, let him appear once in every scene, with a flourish of thunder every time

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to

(b) *Cleomenes*, act v. *Jane Shore*.

to give warning of his coming (c). If you chuse it rather, you may let one of your characters make a compact with the devil. SHAKESPEAR will initiate you into the mystery of the infernal ceremonies, and the whole art of conjuration (d): it was from him that the authors of Oedipus learned to make the devil appear with so much dignity. This contractor having perform'd his part in the course of the play, either to frighten your spectators, or give them notice enigmatically that you have almost done, let the term agreed on expire in your fifth act: after which the devil, disguised like a gentleman, must come upon the stage, to take possession of his own (e). This may inspire the people with a salutary fear of damnation.

The sound of a bell is another useful assistance in our tragedy (f). You are to judge yourself whether you will introduce it in your play, and in what scene it will have the strongest effect.

You must preserve, as much as you can, all the pathetic diction you find in your original; but be sure to add a great deal more against kings, in which the French are always too sparing. You must also introduce a satire against ministers, a fine speech upon the laws,

(c) See the tragedy of Oedipus.

(d) Henry VI. 2d part, act i. scene 8.

(e) See the *duke of Guise*.

(f) See *Venice preserv'd*, *Oroonoko*, and several other tragedies.

laws, a few words upon the religion, and a long panegyric upon the government of our native country. When your characters have nothing more to say, you must make them all kill one another: only observe, in respect to theatrical decency, which requires that virtue and vice should have somewhat different treatment, that you let the most guilty die the first. In the last scene the princess, who comes to save the hero of the play, finding him expired, must stab herself, and falling in the midst of the heap of dead bodies that cover the stage, let her before she breaths her last declare the moral of the piece to the spectators, and give them instructions for living well (g). That author of ours who has corrected RACINE's *Andromache* (g), has not fail'd to bring in that princess in the fifth act, not only to order the funeral solemnity of Pyrrhus her new husband, but also to discover to us the moral tendency of that tragedy, which, without such a precaution, might have escap'd the greatest number of those who saw it represented.

It must be confess'd that a scaffold is what best concludes a tragedy, which ought to be terrible, especially at the end. When one can be made use of, omit nothing that may

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(g) See the tragedies of *Jane Shore*, the *Fair Penitent*, the *Mourning Bride*, *Tamerlane*, the *Innocent Adultery*, *Venice preserv'd*, sir *Walter Raleigh*, *Oroonoko*, the *London Merchant*, &c.

(h) Mr. Philips, in the *Distress'd Mother*.

augment the horror of the scene. Bring in axes, daggers, and all the apparatus of executions. If the dignity of the person requires it, take care to have your scaffold hung with black velvet (*i*). But all subjects are not so happy as to admit of this theatrical decoration (*k*), which suits only those in which there is some plot, treason, or robbery, wherein the plays we borrow from the French are very defective. For want of it, if you think proper, you may end your piece with a burial, and all the necessary funeral pomp (*l*).

If

(*i*) Vide the tragedies of *Jane Gray* and the *Royal Convert*.

(*k*) The last scene of *Venice preserv'd* is upon a scaffold, and so is the last scene of *Tyrannic Love*. In *Amboyna*, in the *Fatal Marriage*, and in *Montezuma*, several persons are publicly put to the torture. In the latter of these pieces, amid the torments that are inflicted upon that American prince, he disputes with a Spanish priest concerning religion. “ In our tragedy, nothing is so
“ common as wheels, racks, and gibbets properly adorn’d ; executions decently perform’d ; headless bodies, and bodiless heads, exposed to view ; battles fought ; murders committed ; and the dead carried off
“ in great numbers.—Such is our politeness ! ”

Lord Shaftesbury vol. iii. p. 256.

(*l*) *Aureng-zebe*, a tragedy of Mr. Dryden, ends with the funeral pomp of an Indian princess, who goes to burn herself with the dead body of her husband. The first part of *Henry VI* begins with the funeral procession of the late king. The 2d part begins with a wedding. *Henry VIII*, another of Shakespear’s plays, ends with the christening of queen Elizabeth. This princess, under whose reign this poet liv’d, and who very much admired his works, was probably present at the representation of this very play.

If you have any unhappy disarm'd hero left upon your hands, whom pains have been taken to save from killing himself, let him follow the example of our Oedipus, and throw himself out of a window to put an end to the affair (*m*).

Your play being finished, you must get a friend to write a prologue and epilogue; or if you have no friend who can or will praise you sufficiently, you may write them both yourself, and assure the town that one is from an *unknown hand*, and the other from a *person of quality*. Do not sheepishly think yourself obliged to be modest in these compositions. You have the examples of our greatest authors, who without scruple applaud their own talents, and the beauty of their works (*n*). The actor who pronounces these verses is thought to speak as from himself, or in the name of the company; and an author need not blush at the incense he offers to himself in this manner. Follow the established custom, likewise, of saying as much ill of the works of others, as you do good of your own (*o*). Then come to politicks. If you are a

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court

(*m*) See Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus*, and Shakespear's *Life and Death of King John*.

(*n*) Ben Johnson, in the prologue to *Every Man in his Humour*. In most of his other pieces he either praises himself, or abuses his rivals. The *Poetaster* is a whole comedy consecrated to his own applause, where he celebrates himself in the character of Horace, and lashes his enemies in the character that gives name to the play.

(*o*) Farquhar, in the prologue to *Sir Harry Woldair*.

cant poet (*p*), you may make as much advantage of these small pieces as the French do of the prologues to their operas (*q*), by handsomely bedaubing the government. If, on the contrary, you are a male-content, declaim heartily against the minister, in order to force him to give you a pension. If the nation is at peace, you must cry out for war; if at war, you must be as loud in your demands for peace; and as to our neighbours, you must speak well or ill of them, according as they are for or against us (*r*). And the better still to secure the success of your play, get the favourite actresses of the publick, dress'd in man's cloaths, to speak the epilogue, which you must season, from beginning to end, with such sort of pleasantries as will oblige the ladies to hold up their fans (*s*).

Finally,

(*p*) See Dryden, Farquhar, Rowe, Cibber; the prologue to the *Beaux Stratagem*, the *Twin Rivals*, the *Careless Husband*, &c; and the epilogues to the *Kind Impostor*, the *Recruiting Officer*, &c.

(*q*) Nobody knew better than the late king William how to find his account in this custom of the English stage. The authors he kept in pay inspired the people with the same hatred, which that prince had towards Lewis XIV. Rowe, the author of *Tamerlane*, was he who served him the best in this respect.

(*r*) See the prologue and epilogue to *Amboyna*, a play written in the reign of king Charles II, against the Dutch. *Amboyna* is one of the Molucca islands, and that which abounds the most in cloves.

(*s*) See Wycherly, in the epilogue to his *Country Wife*.
 “ Our modern epilogues are stuff'd with indecencies
 “ and obscenities,” says mr. Fielding in his epilogue to the *Miser*. The very words of this author, which con-

Finally, to give your piece its full lustre, accompany the impression of it with a preface in the same strain as your prologue and epilogue, or with a dedication that may supply the place of a preface. Do yourself honour with what the jesuit RAPIN, and the best of the French criticks have said upon dramatic poetry: talk much of the rules of the stage, to let the world see, that if you have not followed them, it is not because you were ignorant of them: say that “ the French would
 “ not so scrupulously observe them, if they
 “ were not a base and servile people; that
 “ the English, on the contrary, despise them
 “ for no other reason but because they love
 “ liberty in every thing, and have a genius
 “ superior to all the rules; that neither are
 “ the defects of our theatre, nor the beauties
 “ of the French, so considerable, that the
 “ dramatic authors among the latter may by
 “ any means enter into competition with ours
 “ (*t*); that with respect to fecundity and invention, the English authors exceed all
 “ others,

tain so judicious a criticism, are too obscene to be read literally, and therefore we have only given their moral sense. This ingenious writer has elsewhere more than once fallen into the same fault with which he reproaches others.

(*t*) All these phrases are familiar to the English authors. Mr. Dryden expresses himself to this purpose in the preface to his conquest of Granada. “ I will not submit
 “ my characters to the rules of the French stage, whose
 “ love and honour are weigh’d by drams and scruples;
 “ yet where I have endeavoured to give models of exact
 “ virtue

“ others, of all nations and all times.” You may end with saying, “ that you can boldly
 “ and safely boast that you have not borrow’d
 “ one stroke in it from any other author
 “ (u).”

If your piece, after having succeeded upon our stage, comes by chance to be known, and condemn’d by some ill-natur’d French critick, appeal to the laws of our country; tell the town that you are liable to be tried only by your peers, and “ it is unjust that the French
 “ should have any authority here before they
 “ have conquer’d us (w).” In

“ virtue, as in the characters of Almahide, Osmin, and
 “ Ben-Saida, in this play, I can boldly defy the best a-
 “ mong them.” In the prologue to the first part, he wishes “ those scribblers, whose trade is to translate hea-
 “ vy farce in a yet more heavy style, may be subjected to
 “ those duties which the state has thought proper to lay
 “ upon French commodities, of which the very worst of
 “ all is wit.” And yet in this so boasted play most of the principal characters are taken entirely from different French romances, as the Grand Cyrus, Ibrahim, Guzman; in a word, no writer has borrow’d so much from the French as Dryden, who has treated them so ill. Corneille, Racine, Quinault, Scarron, Scudery, La Fontaine, La Calprenede, &c. are the sources from which this English poet, so much celebrated, has drawn most of his theatrical works. The *Mock Astrologer* is T. Corneille’s *Feint Astrologue*, sir *Martin Mar-Fl* is Moliere’s *Etourdi*. In his comedy called *Love in a Nunnery* he has taken most of his characters from the *Comical Romance*.

(u) See Congreve, in the preface [dedication] to his *Double Dealer*, which is taken from Moliere’s *Tartuffe*, *Misanthrope*; and *Femmes Scavantes*, and from La Fontaine’s tales, *Le Mari cocu, battu & content*.

(w) See Dryden’s preface to *All for Love*. In this very piece the character of Dolabella is taken from Antio-
 chu

In COMEDY, you will observe almost the same method that I have prescrib'd for tragedy; namely, you may take a comedy of Moliere, Renard, or some such French author, (x) all the characters of which you must work up to excess, and give more perplexity to the action. A fifth act, to unravel the plot, will be always at your command, when and how you please. Upon our stage it is not necessary that the discovery should be natural; it is sufficient if it comes unexpectedly. If, for the groundwork and circumstances of the play, it is not our custom to strike out all from ourselves, “it is not for want of invention that we borrow from the French, but
“ only

thus in Racine's *Berenice*, and it is not difficult to trace the features of Titus in his *Anthony*. Neither his Titus, nor any of Racine's amorous heroes, whom the English poet so severely censures, have any thing so insipid in them as the title he has given to this tragedy, viz. *All for Love*; or, *the World well lost*. Anthony, sunk in effeminacy, loses the empire of the universe: this is what Mr. Dryden calls *the World well lost*. Racine deserves to be criticised for bringing too effeminate heroes upon the stage, but Mr. Dryden was not the man to reproach him on that account.

(x) The *Mamamouchi* [what the abbé means by this name I am not theatrical historian enough to know] is taken from the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and *Pourceaugnac*: *The London Cuckolds* from *l'Ecole des Femmes*, and the *Mari-cocu, battu, & content* of Fontaine; *The ridiculous Lovers* from *Dom Bertrand de Cigara*; the *Country Wit* from *l'Amour Peintre*; the *Trial of Conjugal Love* from the *Malade imaginaire*. The 14th scene of the 3d act of *Love in several Masks* is imitated from the 8th of the 2d act
of

“ only our indolence : (y) for we may say,
 “ to the honour of our nation, we never can,
 “ in any age, want writers to dispute the
 “ empire of wit with any people in the uni-
 “ verse (z).”

Thus of the *Misanthrope* you must make, not a discontented philosopher, who is scandalized at the ridiculousness and injustice of his age, and who shuns mankind that he may not be obliged to flatter them ; but a rough and brutal seaman, who takes pleasure in affronting every one he meets, and spreading in every place the gall and bitterness of his choler (a). The politeness so much aim'd at by the French deprives them of the most happy subjects. Our authors, more faithful to nature,

of *George Dandin*. In the comedy called *The Rival Modes*, the last scene of the third act is taken from the *Homme à bonnes fortunes*.

Very often also the English plays, tho' given as pure originals, are but mere translations. Ravenscroft's *Anatomist* is Poissons *Crispin Medicin*, Cibber's *Nonconformist* is nothing but Moliere's *Tartuffe*, Vanbrugh's *Mistake* is a translation of *Depit Amoureux*. The *Confederacy*, another of the same author's, is a comedy of which he made nothing but the title, it being a literal translation of Dancourt's *Bourgeoises à la Mode*. It is not so surprising as one of our French authors has made it, that this author should write so many plays : nothing is proved by it but that he had the use of books, pens, and ink ; that he was very well acquainted with our language, and wrote easily his own.

(y) Shadwell, an indifferent writer.

(z) Dryden's essay upon dramatic poeſie.

(a) See mr. Wycherly's *Plain Dealer*, a comedy taken from Moliere's *Misanthrope*.

ture, paint her as she is, without her dress, without art, without any foreign ornament; and it is not our opinion that any thing which people say, or can say to each other, ought to be suppress'd upon the stage. Thus our ingenious Vanbrugh, to preserve the character of women, and express the vengeance they are inspired with when you refuse them a favour, makes a widow box Esop's ears (b) when he will not grant her what she demands; and by that means he gives the truth and spirit to his piece which is wanting in the tame French author, from whom he borrowed the subject. In the cheats of Scapin a servant beats his master's father, which is very entertaining. But FARQUHAR does not content himself with this: being a player himself, as well as SHAKESPEAR, he knew how far things must be carried to have an effect upon our stage. In one of his plays, (c) a father disguis'd is knock'd on the head by his son, who knows him; which is something exceedingly comic. "By such means as these the best French play acquires something in the hands of even an indifferent English writer." (cc)

The little invention that MOLIERE had occasions his comedies to be too simple. To remedy this defect, in any one of his plays, which you may please to select, you must marry

(two

(b) *Esop*, act IV.

(c) *The Inconstant*, act III.

(cc) Shadwell's preface to the *Miser*, a play imitated from Moliere.

two new and quite different intrigues : the more foreign they are to the main subject, the more variety they will produce. This has been practised by many of our authors, and among others by the judicious mr. WYCHERLEY (*d*). We love variety beyond every thing. The simplicity of the Greeks would disgust us to death, and we had rather follow the example of TERENCE, who always mingles two actions. It is needless to take much pains to connect them together ; the majority of the spectators troubling themselves little about that : they are used to disjointed intrigues, scenes, and even to a want of connection in the dialogue. Wit, and this singular pleasantry, of which our neighbours, jealous as they are of the glory of our theatre, confess themselves that they have no idea, are the great things that we require, and which you ought chiefly to have in view. If you melt down only two plays into yours, take care that the intrigues of each are equally divided into every act, so that no spectator may be able to distinguish which of them is the principal (*e*).

The

(*d*) In his comedy call'd *the Country Wife*. All the happy scenes in this play are taken from Moliere's *Ecole des Maris* and his *Ecole des Femmes*. The principal character is only an indecent imitation of Agnes in the first, and of Isabella in the second.

(*e*) Several English comedies are of this kind ; but one of the most remarkable is that called *The Spanish Fryar, or the Double Discovery*.

The Spanish plays are very complicated, and yet not so much as ours: but let yours be more or less so, be sure, at the last scene of your fifth act, to bring together all your characters, unless in the course of your play you have deprived any one of the opportunity of appearing, or any one be got so drunk that he cannot appear, or has been so wounded that he is obliged to keep his bed. Whatever some criticks may say, “it is much more difficult thus to conduct two intrigues at a time, each to its particular discovery, than to conduct a play that has only one, and of which all the parts mutually answer and support each other (f).”

For secondary intrigues of this kind, if your imaginations is at a stand, you may have recourse to the short romances, or the tales of BOCCACE and LA FONTAINE, always preserving those that are most libertine; because they succeed best upon our stage (g). In this manner did the Italians formerly compose their comedies out of five or six tales, and the authors of the French stage themselves bring together three or four arguments from TERENCE and PLAUTUS.

Among the new characters wherewith you enrich your play, observe to bring in a French
Petit

(f) See the dedication of the play last quoted.

(g) Southern, in his *Innocent Adultery*, has adapted La Fontaine's tale of *Purgatorie* to the stage: the scene passes in a churchyard; there is singing; and at last the husband is raised.

Petit Maitre (*b*), whom you must copy after those adventurers who come to seek their fortune in our isle, or after some of those poor ridiculous refugees who use Slaughter's Coffee-house. These characters have a very comical effect upon the stage: the kicks received by a valet serve instead of humour; they will make the mob, and even the citizens of London laugh; and the success of your work depends upon the pleasure you give to these. In this respect we English are indeed all made alike; we all delight to see the French made little of, and many of our plays would not be so often performed but for the severe strokes they are full of against that nation. When thro' a kind of policy that is beneath us, or to imitate the politeness of our neighbours with whom we should have nothing to do, an attempt was made to suppress some of these strokes upon our stage that were thought too full of contempt and hatred, the celebrated author of the *Craftsman* (*i*), the brave champion of the liberties and rights of the people of England, justly arose against this infraction of our privileges, and cover'd with ridicule and disgrace those that were the authors of it.

If you bring in a parish priest, or a nobleman's chaplain, be sure to make an atheist of him,

(*b*) See the character of *Count Belair* in a comedy called *the Beaux Stratagem*, and that of *Monsieur Marquis* in *sir Harry Wildair*.

(*i*) Vol. IV. N°. 140.

him, or at least place him in a low and ridiculous light, preferring even a pimp before him (*k*). The contrast between his gown and his character produces the more pleasant effect. As to the parsons of our own nation, which would have a religion without priests, the only way to come in vogue is to represent the priests without religion (*l*). Do but this, and let your play be ever so contemptible, you are sure to be applauded by all the enemies of the high church. If you have no minister, you must dress one of your footmen in a clergyman's habit at the end of the play, when you are to marry all the different characters that have been introduced. This is an established custom upon our stage, where most of the marriages are made in this manner (*m*).

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T

You

(*k*) For the origin of this abuse we must go up to Shakspeare, who makes the priests play the most odious and infamous parts in his pieces. See also the chaplain's part in *Virtue in Danger*, and that of Foigard in the *Beaux Stratagem* before quoted.

(*l*) "The licence taken upon our stage, is most abominable. Continually are the clergy exposed there to the laughter of libertines. It is the constant custom not to introduce a minister for any other purpose than to personate a blockhead, a drunkard, or a villain. In no part of the christian, nor even of the pagan world, was the like liberty ever suffered, or rather it was never heard of." Reflexions upon the public good.

(*m*) Consult the comedies of Farquhar, Cibber, Wycherly, and even Congreve, the most judicious and best of the English comic poets. See the *Old Batchelor*, act

IV.

You may also, with a view to the service of your country, admit monks into your comedy, in order to treat them with the contempt you have for them all, and which it is your duty to inspire your countrymen with (n). The heads of our church are more properly the subjects of tragedy, in which SHAKESPEAR has attack'd them openly. Our modern poets are more reserved: when they would make odious pictures, they introduce the priests of false gods who appear only to be handsomely abused, but in such an artful manner that the audience may know who is meant in fact. If you do but put a musti's turban about one of their heads, you have a right to treat them just as you please, and thro' their sides more boldly and advantageously to attack the spiritual lords whom they represent, and who are the secret butt of satire (o).

To conform to the taste of the greatest number of your spectators, be careful, in some part of your comedy, to introduce a scene or two of a tavern (p); and as much as
your

IV. scene 7. In the 5th act of the *Double Dealer* two persons are disguised as ministers. See also the *Provok'd Wife*, &c.

(n) *The Spanish Friar* before quoted.

(o) In *Don Sebastian of Portugal* the musty plays the character of the greatest villain. See also that of Magas in the *Ambitious Step-mother*.

(p) In the third act of the *Provok'd Wife* there is a scene of a tavern where the company smoke and sing indecent songs, equally affrontive to religion and good manners.

your subject will permit, find means to introduce some whores and highwaymen (q). The sight of a man drowned in his liquor is the best lesson of temperance, and the most sure means of weaning a person from bad company, is to expose him to the hazards that attend such company. Such is the moral of mr. GAY's famous *Beggar's Opera* (r), and of many other pieces upon our stage, which scandalize only those who do not perceive the utility that young people may draw from them. Do not scruple therefore to bring in such people of both sexes, as are of the most infamous, if not the most criminal profession.

“ It would be an affront to our ladies to imagine they can be offended with the represen-

T 2

“ tation

In the first act of mr. Wycherly's *Love in a wood*, the second scene passes in a public house, and almost all the third in a place of ill fame.

In the *Gentleman Dancing Master*, another play of the same writer's, the first act passes in a public house among leud women.

(r) Gibbet, a highwayman, is one of the principal characters in Farquhar's *Beaux Stratagem*: And in his *Twin Rivals*, there is a whole scene in a place of debauchery. In his *Inconstant* also, Oriana, disguised like a servant, delivers her lover from the danger he is in among a gang of house-breakers.

(r) In this scandalous farce, so cried up by the English, the scene is continually either in a Jail, or in the haunts of thieves. In the play called *The Fortune-hunters*, part of the fifth act passes in a Jail, where a woman comes in man's cloaths to find her lover. These disguises are very common upon the English stage, and frequently are made to deceive the lover himself, as well as others. See *Love and a bottle*, the *Plain-dealer*, &c.

“tation of such persons (s).” A comic author ought to paint the manners of his time, and to shew vice in all its deformity, since it has the boldness to appear in the world with so much effrontery. To prove the great licentiousness of the morals of your age, fear not to bring upon the stage the most scandalous excesses, and never scruple to present before your spectators a picture of those actions which they do not scruple to commit (t). If some squeamish persons look upon representations of that sort to be dangerous, it is their own fault: you mean well, and your good intentions will cover you from reproach. Thus in the third act of one of our comedies, the scene of which passes in a place of ill repute (u), you see a prostitute in her bed, and a libertine in his shirt, ready to bear her company, who falls thro’ a trap into a house of office, with the filth of which he soon after appears all over covered. It is easy to perceive

(s) Farquhar’s preface to the *Twin Rivals*.

(t) In one of mrs. Centlivre’s comedies such scandalous indecencies pass upon the stage as are alone sufficient to prove it the work of a woman. All the plays of Farquhar, and even of Congreve himself, are filled with scenes of this kind. See *The Old Batchelor*, *The Double-dealer*, *The Wild Gallant*, *Epsom Wells*, *the Country Wit*, &c.

In the fourth act of *Virtue in danger*, Berinthia talks in a manner quite shocking to modesty, and there is a scene of adultery, which ’tis surprising should be suffered in a land that has any laws.

(u) In the *Rover*.

ceive that the author, by representing such a scene before the spectators, means to teach them not to trust women of bad life, and, by the punishment of this debauchee, to inspire them with a just horror for those wretches whose company is so dangerous. A scene of this kind discovers the thorns that are hidden under the roses.

Do not forget, because it is an essential thing, to make two or more of your gentlemen fight, once at least, and let there be a little blood spilt upon the stage for the diversion of the upper gallery (w). If two brothers happen to be *rivals in love*, it is no infringement of decency upon our stage to make them draw upon one another, and fight as long as you please; only it will not be quite so proper to kill them, because the laws of comedy do not admit of killing. But to supply that defect, and to enliven your piece, you may, if you think it necessary, cause some

T 3

party

(w) In the play last quoted the several characters fight five or six times. In the *Rival Ladies*, two women, dress'd like men, have a bout with the sword. In the *Beaux Ducl*, two women, with their swords drawn, punish with kicks the cowardice of two men who engage one another with foils. See also *The Fortune-hunters*.

“ In our new plays as well as our old, in comedy as
 “ well as in tragedy, our stage is nothing but a scene
 “ of slaughter. In our comedy we have duels, battles
 “ often between several persons, wounds received, and
 “ sometimes even the surgeon comes in to dress them,
 “ &c.” Earl of Shaftesbury in his *Advice to an*
author.

(x) *The Twin Rivals*.

party from abroad to make his appearance, whose death the spectators must be apprized of as you proceed (z).

You may also, in order to render your comic humour the more entertaining, place the scene of your play sometimes in a convent, and introduce a lover to his mistress in the disguise of a monk (z); or you may appoint a rendezvous in a church after evening prayers (a). Our theatre has great privileges; and what our neighbours look upon as indecent or impious, is to us only humour and entertainment.

If you introduce any women of learning, follow the example of those among us who have adjusted MOLIÈRE'S *Femmes Scavantes* to our stage. The French writer was content with making them talk only of poetry and natural philosophy: but one of our authors hath so much improv'd upon him, that she makes her ladies observe the circulation of the blood in a fish thro' a microscope (b). At present you could not do better than introduce a scene of experiments upon the electricity of bodies, or some other fashionable branch of philosophy. Every thing strikes more strongly when it is represented before the eyes. MOLIÈRE was often so happy as to have subjects before him which might have

(y) *Sir Harry Wildair.*

(z) *The Inconstant, or Love in a nunnery.*

(a) In the play of *Love makes a man*, the scene is at church after evening service.

(b) *The Basset-table.*

have been much heighten'd by representation upon the stage; but he, for want of genius, seldom availed himself of that circumstance. Mercury's Caduceus is of no use to him in his *Amphytrion*; but observe what miracles it works in the hands of our celebrated DRYDEN (c), and the ingenious diversions wherewith the imagination of this inventive poet has embellish'd the too uniform comedy of the pretended French Plautus.

To prove that you are learned, you may put some little Latin (d) into your dialogue, and answer the reproaches of a woman who does not understand him by quotations out of VIRGIL: her distraction at not knowing what is said to her, and rage that she cannot get it interpreted, may throw a great deal of pleasantry into the scene (e).

You have also a sure means of pleasing the mob by bringing some of our nonconformists upon the stage: these are characters so much the more easy to hit, as their dress alone will commonly suffice to raise a laugh (f). The French dare not reap in this spacious field, so fruitful in good strokes of hu-

T 4

mour :

(c) *The Two Sofias*.

(d) Shakespear has put the little Latin he knew into his plays.

Tiberius cites Greek verses in Ben Johnson's *Sejanus*.

(e) *The Inconstant*, act iii.

(f) *The Dissenter*, *A bold stroke for a wife*. See also the character of Tribulation, a pastor of Amsterdam, in Ben Johnson's *Alchymist*.

mour: what use might they otherwise have made of their quietists? Among their divines of different parties, as well as among ours, there are too many characters whose broad beaver would afford subject of ridicule; but every thing that borders upon religion appears to them sacred. Besides if we have more privileges in comedy than the French, it is because of the greater difficulty to succeed in it upon our stage than upon the French. “The French have more mercury in their heads, and less beef and pudding in their bellies. Our solidity makes difficult to us what is easy to their levity (g).”

Give to your persons such names as may express their character. Call a fop monsieur Fatenville; a coquet, madame de Milleamant; a hypocrite, mr. Maskwell; an amorous old woman, madam Lackit. MOLIERE was often deficient in this practice, which obliges one to read whole scenes of his plays before one can be acquainted with the characters he introduces. If yours are so complicated and unfixed that you cannot hit upon a name to express what they are, and have nothing in their actions or discourse that can possibly let the audience know what is their business, rank, and design, you must take care to explain all in *the Dramatis Personæ*, which will

(g) Vanbrugh, in the preface to his *Æsop*.

will only keep the spectators in suspense till your play is printed (*b*).

Make as little use as possible of the wit and language of the French plays which you take to pieces for the construction of yours; “because your own invention (bad as it may be) can furnish you with nothing so dull as what is there: for their poets wanting judgment to make, or to maintain true characters, strive to cover their defects with ridiculous figures and grimaces (*i*).”

You will really find so little wit in their best plays, that you must be obliged to make use of your own in heightening up every character.

For the same reason as in tragedy we sometimes make a prince speak like one of the mob, you may in comedy make a footman talk like a philosopher, and a country clown reason in politicks like a frequenter of WILL's coffee-house.

With regard to the style, it is not necessary to have it quite so swelling as that of tragedy. The dialogue of comedy ought to be natural, but not to exclude witticisms, as the French seem to suppose. Tho' most of them pique themselves upon their wit, their having so little of it, is, in fact, the cause why it appears so distinguishably here and there in their works. They pretend that their judgement

(*b*) See *The Constant Couple*, *The Artifice*, *The Basset-table*, *The Inconstant*, *The Plain-dealer*.

(*i*) Dryden's preface to the *Mock Astrologer*.

ment teaches them to spare their wit; but we say that too much use cannot be made of what we have, which makes our wit acknowledged all over Europe. The taste they cloak themselves with is only a mask to cover their poverty: be not afraid, therefore, to employ the boldest figures in your play. It signifies but little whether your comparisons are just or no; your business is to have them frequent. Above all be lavish of antitheses, that being the figure which has most of the air of wit, tho' in fact it requires little of it. You must take in any assistance that can be brought upon the stage in order to raise a laugh: even the most indecent jokes upon the scripture, be they good or bad, may be ventured (*k*): you must also have something at the French, and their king (*l*). In a word, season your dialogue plentifully with epigrams, puns, double meanings, lascivious expressions (*m*), unless the indecency of the action be so great that you have no occasion for the freedom of style to work your effect (*n*). If any too severe

(*k*) The Provok'd Wife.

(*l*) Love in several masks, by mr. Fielding.

(*m*) "I dare maintain, says the English Spectator, "with respect to all poets in general, that never any of them wrote obscenities but because his invention was at a stand." I question whether the English comic poets, with mr. Congreve at their head, would have subscrib'd to this opinion, how just soever it may be.

(*n*) The English are so accustomed to the license of their stage, that they are not afraid to ascribe a moral to

vere judge should take it in his head to condemn the licence of your style, answer him, in your own justification, “that there is more
 “ filth in one scene of FLETCHER than in
 “ your whole play, and that every thing is
 “ permitted upon the English stage, except
 “ it be to tire the audience.”

When you have any tender scene to handle, quit the style of prose, because verse gives more of the pathetic to the expression (*p*). And if, for the sake of variety, you have a mind to blend burlesque with sentiment, you may make one of your actors speak in prose, and the other in verse (*p*). On all other occasions end your scenes and acts with two or three couplets and a triplet (*q*).

As for the prologue, epilogue, and preface, they

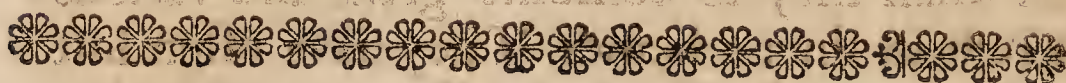
to plays in which there is the utmost depravation of manners. The author of *Virtue in Danger* says, That every woman of good sense, who shall read his piece without partiality, will find it so innocent, that she will not scruple to lay it upon the same table with her prayer-book. He even appeals, with confidence, to the most severe judgments; and yet few comedies are more dangerous to read than this. In the fourth act the conversation is quite loose, and adultery is committed almost before the eyes of the spectators. Neither French nor good manners will permit a translation of those scenes in which sir John Vanbrugh pretends “ he has
 “ not writ any thing loose enough to make friends of
 “ those who have criticised him.”

(*o*) *The Two Sofias*, &c.

(*p*) *The Rover*, *The Anatomist*, &c.

(*q*) *The Beaux Stratagem*, *Love and a bottle*, *The Constant Couple*, *The Fortune-hunters*, *The Inconstant*, *The Artifice*, *The Artful Husband*, &c.

they are absolutely the same things here as in tragedy: cry up the English comedies, and above all your own: maintain boldly that “our writers have much surpassed all those of “other nations, antient or modern (r);” and express the highest contempt for the French, and for their productions of all kinds (s).



L E T T E R LXXVIII.

T O M. D U C L O S.

English bad negotiators, and why. Disadvantages that an English minister lies under. The spirit of party. Balance of power; true interest of England, &c.

L O N D O N , & c .

S I R ,

TO entertain the man who is writing the history of LEWIS XI with any other subject than that of politicks, would be putting him quite out of his way. I leave you to examine the policy of a prince who pass'd for the greatest politician of his time, and who, by his dexterity in the art of reigning,

(r) Dryden's Essay of dramatic Poësie.

(s) Epilogue to Sir Harry Wildair. “Angli suos & “sua omnia impense mirantur, cæteras nationes de- “spectui habent.” Barclay.

ing, did at once establish his power within the kingdom, extend his frontiers without, and render the French monarchy redoubtable to its neighbours.

It has been long remarked that the English are not so dexterous in negotiation as some other nations in Europe, who are much less used than they to combine great and various interests in their schemes. They have often lost by single treaties the fruit of many victories. And yet, in a country where the different orders of men have all a part in the government, one would think the policy should be more refined: how then does it happen that the English, who are so very knowing in politics, are not superior to their neighbours when they come to put this knowledge in practice?

A man need only be a witness of what passes among them to perceive the reason of this seeming contradiction: it is not that the English are ignorant in the art of negotiating, but because their manner of thinking and conducting themselves will not always permit them to use the skill they possess. They are so sensible of this themselves, that they call negotiations "their enemies artillery." A series of treaties in England tends only to beget a new war.

A minister perpetually striving against domestic factions, has less advantage than another, when he is called upon to overthrow the projects of an ambitious neighbour: all the

resources he might otherwise have to support the interest of his sovereign abroad, he is obliged to employ at home to defend himself against a party which labours incessantly to ruin him.

Besides, he cannot treat in foreign courts with the necessary confidence, because if what he does receives the king's sanction, he has the utmost room to fear it will not be ratified by the nation. In vain does he pursue the wisest measures; the faction in opposition to him will render them all fruitless.

If the king happens to be engaged in a necessary war, there is a loud cry against the minister that he is ruining their commerce: if the minister is so fortunate as to keep up a perfect harmony with his neighbours, his enemies will endeavour to throw down the altars of peace, in order to bury him under the ruins: so that he has need of all his courage, and all his address, to support himself in a place, which is in no country so much hated, and at the same time so much envied, as in England.

With how much vehemence, and what indecency is the present minister declaimed against at this time: the most necessary measures for the maintenance of government are treated as attempts against the liberties and rights of the people. If the views of him who governs are so criminal as they are supposed, what must we think of the parliament, in which he is almost always secure of a plu-

a plurality of voices? If the minister is culpable, those who justify him cannot be innocent. It is a meanness to flatter a man only on account of his authority; but it shews a no less depravation of heart to defame him, without any other motive than his power. He that envies and he that flatters are equally guilty against the society, whose interests they sacrifice to their own private views; the first in that he endeavours to tarnish the merit he cannot bear to look on, and the latter because he renders to vice the homage that is due only to virtue.

An English minister is in the condition of a man, who, while he enjoys an office of importance, is uneasy in his own family: how vigilant soever he may be, and how good soever his intentions, the disorders of his house will prevent his giving all his attention to the duties of his place. His home affairs will always in some measure be uppermost, and no man is equal to several things at once. Humanity is not perfect, and those who declaim so vehemently against ministers, would be more indulgent, if they did but consider how difficult it is to govern mankind, even if there be no view in the administration but to their true interests.

The parliament takes upon it to penetrate into the political views of the minister, either to approve or reject them. In a multitude of councillors there is often wisdom, but seldom secrecy. This, sir, is one of the principal disadvantages

advantages of the English government. The ministry, when too strongly opposed, cannot always execute what it had intended for the good of the nation.

Those English who are not blinded by the spirit of party, are forced to acknowledge the ability of the present minister in whatever regards the interior government of the kingdom: but they reproach him for not having skilfully provided for the interests of England in the different treaties wherein he has engaged his nation; they accuse him for having assisted to break the equilibrium of Europe, which he ought to have, and might have maintained. Sir ROBERT WALPOLE, on the contrary, in several pamphlets that he has published in his own vindication, pretends that he has been obliged to give way to the times. I will not presume to give my opinion any farther than just to say, that perhaps the enemies of this minister would make him responsible for what the most consummate prudence could not foresee. Good policy can take advantage of occasions, but it cannot always make them arise. There is a providence that laughs at human wisdom, and disposes of events according to its own good pleasure.

The pretence which the English set up of maintaining a balance in Europe, which is often but imaginary, is perhaps more flattering to the vanity of individuals, than advantageous in fact to the nation. It causes them at present to take part in all the wars of their
neigh-

neighbours, the weight of which is commonly thrown upon them by their allies. Henry VIII was the first king of England who undertook to establish this balance: but that prince was too much devoted to his passions to follow constantly any one plan of government, which made his reign a medley of folly, violence, and uncertainty. Elizabeth his daughter, a princess who was the glory of her nation, and who possess'd all the virtues of both sexes, without the weakneses of her own, was in fact the only one of the English monarchs who knew how to hold this political balance with a hand always steady and equal. She artfully avail'd herself of the conjunctures that fell in her way: but Europe is not now in the same situation.

In the ordinary course of things, an island under a single government, rich in itself, richer still by commerce, is not obliged to meddle with the affairs of the continent, and enter into systems of alliances and leagues. The English, thro' passion, often make themselves parties in a quarrel wherein they might be mediators. Let us confess, however, that such is the power and valour of this nation, that whenever resentment against their neighbours has got the better of their intestine divisions, they have made themselves formidable to Europe. Unhappy for them, when they are not at war with their enemies, they are quarrelling among themselves.

Ever since the reign of king James I, when, under the odious name of whig and tory,

two parties began to divide the state, one may say that there have always been two nations in one, that never have been at peace with each other, tho' sometimes obliged to a truce by foreign affairs.

Every faction is a new state that erects itself in the former; and how can the parties in it be innocent, when in the first step they take to set up for independency, they withdraw themselves from the establish'd authority? In fact, most of the attempts of faction to reform a state, tend only to subvert it. To make use of MONTAIGNE's expressions, "They act like weak physicians of little experience. The humours which they attempt to purge, they only enflame, exasperate, and sour by the conflict; and if we remain alive, they know not how to purge us thro' their own weakness, and yet we are continually weaken'd."

The more easy a people are, the more united they ought to be. The English, as they are richer, and more disunited than their neighbours, must necessarily have some fault in their government which disturbs the harmony of it; and these riches must arise from a natural cause, quite different from the moral one that disunites them; as their island, situation, their possessions in America, &c.

Such domestic dissensions more than once brought the Roman republic within an ace of its ruin. The civil wars, which the factions of the great men formerly kindled in France, were

were perhaps more fatal to the state, than the too absolute government of some of our ministers. A nation cannot make itself fear'd abroad but in proportion as it is united at home. The power of a state and that of a family are of the same nature; for a state is a great family: neither can subsist, if the members of it do not mutually support each other by the bonds of union. And how seldom is it that those who would break these sacred ties, have really nothing else in view but the good of human kind, and the interest of their country!

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXXIX.

To Monsieur DE BUFFONS.

Of English highwaymen. Pleasant adventure of Turpin with a foreign gentleman. Bad custom of bringing vile characters upon the stage. Way of levying contributions on the road. Bad roads in England. Absurd apology of the English for the abuses that reign among them.

NEWMARKET, &c.

SIR,

YOU have heard of the bad management in England with regard to the

highways, and you know that here, as in Turkey and Persia, a man cannot travel without running the hazard of being robb'd. Your friend M. C**, who arrived yesterday at Newmarket, was surprized last year near Cambridge by the celebrated Turpin, the Cartouche of his nation. The highwayman, after having repeated in vain the word of command to stand, in order to punish him for his disobedience, fired a pistol at him; but the ball happily miss'd him. M. C** fearing a second summons of the same kind, resolved to obey. The highwayman took his money, his watch, and his snuff-box, leaving him only two shillings to continue his journey. Before he left him, he required his word of honour that he would not cause him to be pursued, nor inform against him before a justice; which being given, they both parted very courteously.

They met together at the races, and renewed their acquaintance. M. C** kept his word religiously: he not only avoided causing him to be seiz'd, but now boasts of having got back some of his money in a more honest way. The highwayman offer'd him a bet, which your friend accepted with as good a grace as he could have done from the best gentleman in England, and had the lucky fortune to win it. Mr. Turpin, smitten with his generous behaviour, paid him honestly the money he had won, and was very sorry that the trifling affair, which had hap-
pen'd

pen'd between them, did not permit them to drink together.

If any foreigner, instead of laughing at such humours, which are here thought very genteel, takes the liberty to blame so ridiculous a conduct in private persons, and so sensible a defect in the government; the English, prejudiced in favour of their nation, defend with the utmost warmth their most vicious customs, as well as their wisest laws, and are as sanguine for the defects of their constitution, as for the most essential advantages attach'd to it. They will rather joke upon this want of security on their roads, if you reproach them with it, than own it is a scandalous thing, in a government otherwise so well regulated, that a man cannot travel in safety. There are some Englishmen not less vain in boasting of the address of their highwaymen, than of the bravery of their troops. I was one day told a story, which the relator was much delighted with, concerning a highwayman in his county, who stopp'd a gentleman that he knew to be very rich; but not finding about him above five or six guineas, took the liberty to tell him that the next time he met him so ill provided, he would give him a handsome licking.

Jokes of this sort are very much in the English taste, and a noted thief is a kind of hero, in high repute among the populace. The mob is in all countries easily mov'd, and looks in general with concern upon criminals.

that are conducting to the gallows ; but an English mob is delighted to see such persons go thro' their last scenes with resolution, and applauds those that are insensible enough to die as they had lived, braving the justice of God and men. These malefactors are permitted, in some measure, to deprive themselves with strong liquors of the reflexions necessary in their circumstances : they quit life without a sense of the crime for which they suffer ; and the populace are ready to admire a courage that is owing only to their drunkenness, tho' esteem'd an honour to the nation.

The poets themselves sing the exploits of these wretches. One of them has made a song which is very much in vogue, wherein he asserts that Alexander the great was in prison in the midst of the universe ; that the king of England is a prisoner in his isle, the sultan in his seraglio, a monk in his convent, a learned man in his study, and, in a word, that all men, where-ever they live, are only prisoners. I have seen Englishmen in raptures with this song, and who always sung it whenever they had a mind to put themselves in good humour.

I am sorry that Cartouche has been suffered to appear upon the stage at Paris, and that a Frenchman should make the crimes of a villain the subject of diversion in a burlesque poem : but it is shameful both to the English stage and the English taste, that their comedies are so full of thieves, and that the Beggar's

gar's opera, all the characters in which are highwaymen and pickpockets, hath so long entertained, and continues to entertain the city of London; and has found protectors even among the principal persons in the kingdom, of both sexes.

What an attack is it upon good manners to throw favourable colours on the pleasures, equally infamous and criminal, of a gang of cut-purses; to represent villains, who defy all remorse, giving themselves up to a brutal joy, in which they place their felicity! How can we think it possible that such low farces, the sentiments of which are so dissolute and dangerous, should not appear scandalous upon the stage! What a fine sight is the representation of criminals, laden with irons, dancing, singing, drinking, and laughing in jail; laughing at the very justice that detains them, and the final punishment which they are to suffer! Ought the gallows to be an engine to sport with, for any writers whatsoever? what pleasure can honest people take in such representations? Unhappily SHAKESPEAR set the example in one of his plays (*a*), where there is a droll scene between a hangman and his patient: it was he that accustom'd the English to see the gibbet and the wheel upon their theatres.

To return from the thieves in plays, who give here so much diversion, to those who rob on the highway: it is usual in travelling

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to

(*a*) *Measure for Measure*, act IV.

to put ten or a dozen guineas in a separate pocket, as a tribute to the first that comes to demand them: the right of passport, which custom has established here in favour of the robbers, who are almost the only highway surveyors in England, has made this necessary; and accordingly these fellows are by the English called *Gentlemen of the road*, the government letting them exercise their jurisdiction upon passengers without much molestation. To say the truth, they content themselves with only taking the money of those who obey without disputing: but notwithstanding their boasted humanity, the lives of those who endeavour to get away are not always safe. They are very strict and severe in levying their impost, and if a man has not wherewithal to pay them, he may run the chance of getting himself knock'd on the head for his poverty.

About fifteen years ago these robbers, in order to maintain their rights, fixed up papers at the doors of the rich people about London, expressly forbidding all persons, of what condition or quality soever, to go out of town without ten guineas and a watch about them, upon pain of death. In bad times, when there is little or nothing to be got on the roads, these fellows assemble in gangs to raise contributions even in London itself, and the watchmen seldom trouble themselves to interrupt them in their vocation.

Troops of archers, like those so wisely established in France, might remedy this abuse

luse : but the English will have no such establishment; they are afraid of troops, and even of all places in the king's disposal. They had rather be robb'd upon the highways than in their houses, and by wretches of desperate fortune than by ministers. On the other hand, it would not be for the sovereign's interest to entrust the parliament with a body of armed men, let it be never so small. But is it not strange that the English, who are otherwise so careful of preserving their wealth, should be no more solicitous to secure it against robbers? Could not means be employ'd, which, without being dangerous to liberty, might be more efficacious than those at present made use of? Their government is subject to several inconveniences to which remedies might be found : but such is their prevention in favour of their laws, that whatever is amiss thro' their imperfection, they think it inevitable.

The bad roads in England are another proof of what I advance. They are almost every where impassable in winter, which is the reason that post chaises (*b*) are unknown in this country, and that in many places you are not safe even in a coach. There have been, indeed, a great many acts of parliament to repair the roads; but they answer scarce any other purpose than to enrich the undertakers, by levying a tax upon passengers for reparations that are not made. Eng-
land

(*b*) If the Abbé had staid here but a very few years longer, he would not have said this.

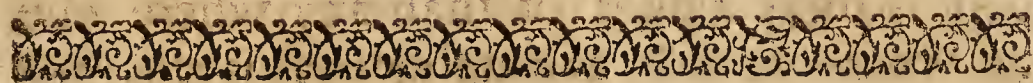
land is perhaps a country where the public good is more talk'd of than any where else, but where in fact private interest is the most pursued. If you ask an Englishman the reason of all the abuses that reign among them, he will tell you they are inevitable in a country of liberty, like theirs. Liberty, it seems, is the blessing that hinders them from making their roads either safe or passable, and keeps them from having either a good pavement or a good policy in the city of London (c). With this sounding word they palliate every thing, and remedy nothing. People do not always know their true interests, and sometimes must have happiness forced upon them. If the task be more difficult here than in other countries, time, and prudent measures gradually taken, might effect those changes here which authority would make at once in other countries. Abuses ought not to be suffer'd in any establishment, till after all possible ways of reforming them have been tried in vain.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.

(c) “ The mud and infection of some places in the
 “ city, the inconveniences and accidents one is every
 “ where exposed to by the badness of the pavement, and
 “ the filth of the streets, are a reproach to us in the eyes
 “ of foreigners : they have reason to believe us a people
 “ not only without politeness, but without government;
 “ a herd of barbarians, and a colony of hottentots.”

Lord Tyrconnel's speech in the house of commons.



LETTER LXXX.

To the Marquis DU T**;

*Of the English horse-races, and particularly
of Newmarket. Other diversions. Lust of
gaming. A history of race-horses.*

NEWMARKET, &c.

My LORD,

IT is difficult to know a nation unless you conform to their way of living, and you must, in some measure, espouse their taste, if you would study their manners with equal profit and pleasure. A man must often make a party in those diversions which he wants to know only as the object of speculation: this is what I now experience at Newmarket, whither I have follow'd the vast concourse of people that are drawn together by the races. Charles II used to take such delight in these diversions, that he was constantly down here twice a year, a month each time. There are other races in the several counties of England; but these are the most celebrated, and most worthy the curiosity of a stranger.

What to me is the most surprizing in these sports, is the considerable wagers that are laid at them. A gentleman's good opinion of
a horse

a horse shall sometimes cost him a year's income of his estate. We have people who ruin themselves in expensive equipages; but the English sacrifice more to madness, and less to vanity. They are little solicitous about rich cloaths, and a delicious table; but make no scruple of venturing a hundred guineas upon a horse. Great odds, inconsiderate bets, that is, upon the whole, love of gain, are as fatal to the English youth as the ambition of making a figure and spending high is to ours. This way of getting rich with little pains, or ruining themselves with little pleasure, is common here to all ranks of people. Many a mechanic will not hesitate to risk the profits of two years labour upon a wager that pleases him. You will have a man offer you ten guineas to one, who, if he was to lose, would not have a single guinea left. The particular modes of speech in every nation take their rise from the manners of the people, and there is not a more common saying in the English tongue than "ten to one" "such a thing is true." This manner of arguing, so common in England, is very advantageous to the rich: you cannot always answer them, and the victory of their purse is look'd upon the triumph of their reason.

Another singularity which struck me at the races, was the wild and senseless joy of the people, which they carry to a drunken excess that it is scarce possible to give you an idea of. When a horse is conqueror, tho' they cannot

com-

compliment the beast himself, and decree him the honours of a triumph, they load the groom who rode him with more acclamations and applauses, than, perhaps, they would bestow upon the man, who had been most serviceable to his country. The English populace really set more value upon him that diverts them, than upon him who watches over their interests.

Last year I was at the races of a country town, where I saw a gentleman dispute the prize against a shoemaker, and lose it. The mob crown'd their hero with laurels, and carried him about in triumph. This fellow is of a very odd disposition; six months of the year he works at making of shoes, good or bad, and the other six, mounted upon his Bucephalus, he rides over the country, is present at all the races, runs his own horse, and wins sometimes forty Guineas, sometimes another horse, and sometimes only a saddle; for no prize is so low that he will not put in for it. His favourite courser has served him so well, that he is already in a condition to leave off his trade, and intends, for the future, only to make an amusement of it during the winter months.

In France, a young man of quality will perhaps be a little too proud of his dancing with a good grace, and we have some of our fops, who want only the petticoat and stays to enable them to dispute the prize with the other sex. The English love to shine in more masculine

culine exercises. If a young gentleman, among us, has been sometimes tempted to shew his abilities upon the opera stage; I have seen peers of the kingdom, in England, contend personally in the publick races.

Tho' all the gayest youth of the court is to be found here, there are, however, no ladies. Newmarket is too remote from large towns, in which all the time, except just that of the races, is spent, in what are here called innocent amusements, that is to say, in ruining their fortunes by gaming, and their health by debaucheries. High play does indeed begin to be out of fashion here for some years past. Formerly there were professed gamesters, persons like those French marquisses and German barons, whose probity and quality are equally suspected, who lived by this calling: and indeed, some men of quality have been too skilful for their honour, being able to cog a dye to advantage with any sharper in the kingdom.

The women frequent all the other races with as much ardour, and seem to take as much pleasure in them as the men. Hackney-horses and coaches are intermingled with those of better appearance, and which are kept upon better funds. While the races last, there is in all the towns of note a company of strolling-players, whose business is to divert the ladies. The men pass away the time according to their taste, either at the tavern, or their inn: in a word,

They

They have music, dancing, jokes and much wine,

Punch, Harlequin, Pierrot, and miss Catherine.

They have besides, what they call assemblies, that is to say, places where people dance country-dances : it would be running too great a risk to say they make themselves merry. At these assemblies care is taken to let it be known, that the daughter of such a rich country gentleman (miss being all the time present) is to be married ; and a young officer will very often *run his rig*, as they call it, upon a justice of peace who lives in the neighbourhood.

After having mentioned the races, and the pleasure the English take in them, it is necessary to say something to you, about the horses that carry off these prizes. The English take the utmost care to preserve their families, and the genealogy of a good race-horse is almost as well known as that of the most illustrious house. These horses are made no other use of than to run for wagers : they cost a great deal at first, and are maintained afterwards at a vast expence ; but frequently the profit made of them repays all this with interest. His lordship, or his worship, whose horse carries off the prize, is rewarded for his care, as well as reimburs'd his expence. The people of quality in France are much less provident ; they keep fine horses in their stables out of vanity only, and think it shameful to trade in them ;
but

but the English know and consult their own interests a little better.

A horse that has once won a prize at Newmarket, immediately becomes famous over all England: his name is to be seen in all the papers, and is quickly as well known as that of the best writer in his age; his picture is engraved, and all the country gentlemen adorn their parlours with it. I do not say this to the discredit of the engraver, who finds his end in what he does; but to the shame of his customers: for a print of this kind will sell better than the portrait of sir ISAAC NEWTON. The duke of Devonshire's Bohemian, and mr. Morgan's Cartouche, whose pictures I herewith send you, are at present the most celebrated runners in England.

To conclude, there is a man actually at this time writing a book with the following title:
“ A history of all the horses, which have won
“ the prizes at Newmarket races, and the
“ other principal races in England, from their
“ first establishment, down to the year 1738,
“ with the genealogy of the horses, and their
“ portraits, engraved on copper. To which
“ are added, the names of the grooms who
“ rode them, and the people of quality to
“ whom they belonged; and, for the instruction and satisfaction of the reader, as exact
“ an account as could possibly be got, of all
“ the considerable bets that were laid for and
“ against every horse. Three volumes in folio.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXXXI.

TO M. DE BUFFONS.

Taste of the English for gaming. Their calculations of chances, by M. de MOIVRE. Consequences of gaming better worth calculating. M. de BUFFONS desired to demonstrate them. Every gamester a loser.

NEWMARKET, &c.

SIR,

THOUGH at first I was very well entertained at Newmarket, the life the English lead there would be too expensive for me, if I was obliged always to follow it: but having my post-folio continually with me, I take care not to tire myself with any one object. While some lose their money at gaming, and others endeavour to drown in wine their vexation for what they have lost; while a third sort, still more unreasonable, inveigh with fury against what they call fortune, which exists only in idea, and complain of a bad run, which is nothing but the effect of their imprudence: I, meditating in the most retired part of this inn, can laugh at the madness of them all.

There are Englishmen ruined every day at such games, as they have made the principal study of their lives. They are accustomed to calculate probabilities, in events that depend on policy and commerce; because they all look upon themselves as having some share in publick affairs. The probability of life, and the return of ships, are the objects of their arithmetic. They have annuities, stocks, bonds, insurances, all fluctuating property, and many other kinds of publick rites, the value of which depends upon the chance of events; but of which they nevertheless can make a just estimation. The same habit of calculating they extend to games, wagers, and every thing in which there is any hazard. They risque themselves upon understanding the principles of all these things, which are not so simple as might have been imagined, and have given us rules to know the advantages of a gamester in all circumstances.

This talent of combining ideas, which is so necessary in matters of calculation, is more common to the English than to their neighbours; because they are accustomed more to reflexion than other people. The natural vivacity of the French often hinders them from reflecting sufficiently upon what the most concerns them, and it is but too common among us, that chance alone decides the most important actions. The English, who think more, endeavour to bring even chance itself within the power of computation. That freedom

dom of thinking which reigns in England, gives them a taste for abstract ideas, and play among them is rather a matter of study, than a social amusement. However, they play with great warmth; and what is surprising, though they know the best of any men what are the mathematical principles of gaming, they seem to be quite ignorant of its moral consequences.

I have had several conversations upon this subject with the famous m. DE MOIVRE, the greatest calculator of chances now in England: but I did not perceive that he had ever calculated the effects of gaming, with regard to morality, though that is a much more essential thing than the theory of chances.

I well remember, sir, to have heard you say, that gaming might easily be demonstrated to be a vicious and hurtful contract between the two parties contracting; that the loss is necessarily greater than the gain; so that two gamesters, who hazard each a part of his fortune, are both losers by the bargain. It is to be wished, that this truth, which seems a paradox at the first thought, was known by all mankind: you would do a considerable service to society by explaining it, and giving it that sort of demonstration, of which it is susceptible.

Inquiries of this nature are infinitely more useful than those abstract speculations, by which the conditions of any particular games are combined together. We have been shewn by calculation, what is the advantage of the

banker at Pharoah, and we know that a man ought not to play against it, unless he has a mind to be beaten: such sort of knowledge may hinder us from being tempted to play on some occasions. But it would be of much greater importance to shew us demonstratively, that in all games, even those in which there is a perfect equality of chance between the parties, the loss is always greater than the gain, and so much the greater in proportion to the part of a man's fortune that he hazards.

In fact, money ought not to be consider'd as a mathematical quantity, or be estimated by its bulk: we should look for the value of it in the advantages it procures us. Every man who risks the loss of half his fortune at gaming, to acquire a like sum from the fortune of another, hazards a great deal more than he thinks of: his disadvantage will be infinitely greater if he loses, than his advantage will be if he wins: for his circumstances, by losing half his fortune, may be render'd unhappy for ever, but cannot be made one half better by joining half the fortune of another. In such a case a man risks what is necessary to him, to which there can be no equivalent; but can win only what is superfluous, the value of which is always arbitrary.

Few men are so capable as you to make exactly those moral valuations, which notwithstanding are real: but you can convey evidence even into metaphysical truths.

I must add that the great gamesters of this country, who are not usually great geometricians, have a custom of consulting those who are reputed able calculators upon the games of hazard. M. DE MOIVRE gives opinions of this sort every day at Slaughter's coffee-house, as some physicians give their advice upon diseases at several other coffee-houses about London.

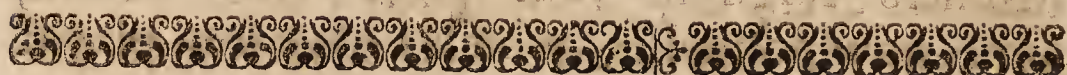
Those who are gamesters by profession have tables ready calculated of all the different chances for laying or taking odds, and they who have not learned them by heart, carry them in their pockets. These tables are made for almost all games of hazard, which admit of infinite variety. The dice in England are wrought with a care and exactness that might be much better employed in some useful piece of mechanism.

In a word, the English mathematicians continue at this day to be very busy in calculating of probabilities, and the chances in hazard, to satisfy the curiosity or avarice of particular persons: but a more flattering glory, both from the citizen and the man of learning, is reserved for you; you, who for the good of the public will demonstrate, by another sort of calculation, which requires equally a fine wit and an extensive understanding, that gaming in its very principle is repugnant to that equality which the geometricians suppose in it, and that consequently, in every respect, it

is both disadvantageous to particular persons and pernicious to society.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXXXII.

TO M. DE LA CHAUSSEE.

Public representations shew the manners of a people. Indecency of some English plays. Account of the act for licensing dramatic pieces, and its effect. English manner of damning a play. Artifice of an author to conciliate the audience to himself. The English inveteracy against the French, and the way for a minister to destroy the liberty of the press. Reflections on the effect that public spectacles have upon human nature.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

PUBLIC spectacles, to speak properly, are the school of a people's manners, in which their tastes, ways of thinking, virtues and vices may be studied. Some English theatrical authors do indeed labour more to flatter than to correct their nation; for they have not all the courage to make truth speak under the mask of humour, and a few of them have

have even not been ashamed to offer incense to certain vices, rather than censure them in their countrymen. As much as you and your brother Academician, M. DES TOUCHES, have been attentive to make politeness and good manners reign in your plays; not less are some new comedies, which I have seen play'd here, directly opposite both to taste and morality.

It is upon the stage chiefly that English liberty has degenerated into licentiousness. The person of the minister is always here a butt for the shafts of satire, * and that of the king is sometimes not more respected. In many plays, that are applauded too, the honour due to sovereigns is trampled under foot, the authority of parliament vilified and degraded, the wisest laws are turned into ridicule, and the sanctity of religion itself is every moment violated with impunity. The scandal has proceeded so far that even religion in person has been introduced upon the stage, to expose her to the laughter of the impious and libertine †. Who could think that such representations would ever be suffered among a people who call themselves civilised and christian!

It was time to restrain a license that might have had the most fatal consequences. The sober people of the nation condemned this a-

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buse,

* One of the most remarkable pieces of this kind is the celebrated *Beggars-Opera*, which had so much success in 1728.

† See the play called *Pasquin*.

buse, without daring to repress it : they look'd upon it as a melancholy, but necessary effect of a good cause. The preservation of our liberties, said they, are owing only to the right that every Englishman has of publishing what he thinks, not of our laws alone, but even of the parliament. A minister has certainly no reason to be afraid of satire, if he will give no cause for it : if he deserves it, his least punishment ought to be that of satirical pens. Majesty cannot be affronted, while the person of the sovereign is not directly attacked ; and if he pays no regard to the authority of the laws, can he complain that his own authority is not respected ? The liberty of the stage is a consequence of that of the nation ; the former cannot be touch'd, without causing the latter to shake. To restrain the right that we have to say what we please, is to enable the minister more easily to dare all he can desire. By this manner of arguing, the liberty of the press appear'd to them not less essential, nor less sacred, than the *Magna Charta* granted to the people*.

But the theatrical authors, for having too much abused this liberty, have just now lost it. The parliament, which they had disgusted by the scandalous temerity of their satires, could not refuse the king an act to suppress them. It is not now lawful in England to bring

* *Magna Charta*, granted by king Henry III, in the 9th year of his reign, is the basis of the laws and liberties of England.

bring a dramatical piece upon any stage whatsoever, unless it has been first approved and licensed by the lord high Chamberlain: so that the English are now, in this respect, upon the same footing as we.

This act occasioned an universal murmur in the nation, and was openly complained of in the public papers: in all the coffee-houses of London it was treated as an unjust law, and manifestly contrary to the liberties of the people of England. When winter came, and the play-houses were opened, that of Covent-garden began with three new pieces, which had been approv'd of by the lord Chamberlain: there was a croud of spectators present at the first, and among the number myself. The best play in the world would not have succeeded the first night*. There was a resolution to *damn* whatever might appear, the word *hiss* not being sufficiently expressive for the English. They always say, to *damn* a piece, to *damn* an author, &c. and in reality the word is not too strong to express the manner in which they receive a play which does not please them. The farce in question was *damn'd* indeed, without the least compassion: nor was that all, for the actors were driven off the stage, and happy was it for the author that

* The action was interrupted almost as soon as begun, in presence of a numerous assembly, by a cabal who had resolved to overthrow the first effect of this act of parliament, tho' it had been thought necessary for the regulation of the stage.

that he did not fall into the hands of this furious assembly.

As you are unacquainted with the customs of this country, you cannot easily devise who were the authors of all this disturbance. Perhaps you may think they were school-boys, apprentices, clerks, or mechanicks. No, sir, they were men of a very grave and genteel profession ; they were lawyers, and please you ; a body of gentlemen, perhaps, less honour'd, but certainly more fear'd here than they are in France. Most of them live in colleges *, where, conversing always with one another, they mutually preserve a spirit of independency thro' the body, and with great ease form cabals. These gentlemen, in the stage entertainments of London, behave much like our foot-boys in those at a fair. With us, your parti-colour'd gentry are the most noisy ; but here, men of the law have all the sway, if I may be permitted to call so those pretended professors of it, who are rather the organs of chicanery, than the interpreters of justice. At Paris the cabals of the pit are only among young fellows, whose years may excuse their folly, or persons of the meanest education and stamp : here they are the fruit of deliberations in a very grave body of people, who are not less formidable to the minister in place, than to the theatrical writers.

The

* Called here *Inns of court*, as the two Temples, Lincoln's-inn, Gray's-inn, Doctors-commons, &c.

The players were not dismay'd, but soon after stuck up bills for another new piece : there was the same crouding at Covent-garden, to which I again contributed. I was sure, at least, that if the piece advertised was not perform'd, I should have the pleasure of beholding some very extraordinary scene acted in the pit.

Half an hour before the play was to begin, the spectators gave notice of their dispositions by frightful hisses and outcries, equal, perhaps, to what were ever heard at a Roman amphitheatre. I could not have known, but by my eyes only, that I was among an assembly of beings who thought themselves to be reasonable. The author, who had foreseen this fury of the pit, took care to be arm'd against it. He knew what people he had to deal with, and, to make them easy, put in his prologue double the usual dose of incense that is offer'd to their vanity : for there is an establish'd tax of this kind, from which no author is suffer'd to dispense himself. This author's wise precaution succeeded, and the men that were before so redoubtable grew calm : the charms of flattery, more strong than those of musick, depriv'd them of all their fierceness.

You see, sir, that the pit is the same in all countries : it loves to be flatter'd under the more genteel name of being complimented. If a man has tolerable address at panegyrick, they swallow it greedily, and are easily quell'd
and

and intoxicated by the draught. Every one in particular thinks he merits the praise that is given to the whole in general; the illusion operates, and the prologue is good only because it is artfully directed. Every one saves his own blush by the authority of the multitude he makes a part of, which is perhaps the only circumstance in which a man can think himself not obliged to be modest.

The author, having by flattery begun to tame this wild audience, proceeded intirely to reconcile it by the first scene of his performance. Two actors came in, one dressed in the English manner very decently, and the other with black eyebrows, a riband of an ell long under his chin, a bag-peruke immediately powder'd, and his nose all bedaubed with snuff. What Englishman could not know a Frenchman by this ridiculous picture! The common people of London think we are indeed such sort of folks, and of their own accord add to our real follies all that their authors are pleased to give us. But when it was found, that the man thus equipp'd, being also laced down every seam of his coat, was nothing but a cook, the spectators were equally charm'd and surprized. The author had taken care to make him speak all the impertinencies he could devise, and for that reason, all the impertinencies of his farce were excused, and the merit of it immediately decided. There was a long criticism upon our manners, our customs, and above all, upon our cookery. The excellence

lence and virtues of English beef were cried up, and the author maintain'd, that it was owing to the qualities of its juice that the English were so courageous, and had such a solidity of understanding, which rais'd them above all the nations in Europe: he preferred the noble old English pudding beyond all the finest ragouts that were ever invented by the greatest geniusses that France has produced; and all these ingenious strokes were loudly clapp'd by the audience.

The pit, bias'd by the abuse that was thrown on the French, forgot that they came to damn the play, and maintain the ancient liberty of the stage. They were friends with the players, and even with the court itself, and contented themselves with the privilege left them, of lashing our nation as much as they pleased, in the room of laughing at the expence of the minister. The license of authors did not seem to be too much restrain'd, since the court did not hinder them from saying all the ill they could of the French.

Intractable as the populace appear in this country, those who know how to take hold of their foibles, may easily carry their point. Thus is the liberty of the stage reduced to just bounds, and yet the English pit makes no farther attempt to oppose the new regulation. The law is executed without the least trouble, all the plays since having been quietly heard, and either succeeded, or not, according to their merit.

There

There is but one step more to touch the liberty of the press, which the English so highly prize, at the same time that they grossly abuse it. Under CHARLES II, it was restrained by an act of parliament; but king WILLIAM, who could not ascend the throne but by composition with a people who were not born his subjects, restored it in full latitude; since which the court has been quite easy upon that head. However, if any minister should hereafter dare to attack it, I believe, the most sure method to proceed would be, to begin with a declaration, that the English authors should not be disturbed in their privilege immemorial, of abusing the French as much as they thought proper.

With respect to plays, the English government did not, perhaps, till too late, perceive the necessary influence that they have upon the manners of the people, in regard either of politicks, morality, or religion. It is always difficult to eradicate from the minds of men the shoots of corruption that have once infected them. The stage is a necessary amusement in all civiliz'd countries; it serves to relax those who have too close employment, and to fill up the vacant time of those who are idle. Every individual seeks his own pleasure only in going to a play; but it is the part of a wise government to make that pleasure turn to the advantage of the society in general. Policy may avail itself of the theatre, more than is commonly thought, of which the Greeks are
a re-

a remarkable instance. Most of their tragedies were dictated by the republican spirit, and breath'd nothing but hatred of royalty. In every state whatsoever, the theatre should be made use of as a means to inspire the people with such manners and sentiments as are necessary to their own felicity. Advantages are sometimes enjoyed when the value of them is not known; and others, when lost, are regretted, for no other reason, but want of knowing the inconveniencies that were inseparable from them.

It was the saying of an ancient, "When I quit the company of men, I return more covetous, more ambitious, and more corrupted." Quite the reverse happens to me, who always come away more virtuous from the representation of one of CORNEILLE's tragedies: and since there is no effect without a cause, ought we not from hence to conclude, that there is nothing indifferent? The sensation that affects a man at a play, will always contribute something to his manner of thinking: for our most important actions may depend upon certain impressions, which we received without observing the consequences of them. The impressions of the present moment are strong only from the relation they have with what has before struck us. There is in our life, as in nature, a chain that connects all, and makes every thing either cause or effect of something else. The meaner class of people do well, when they use their children early to the sight
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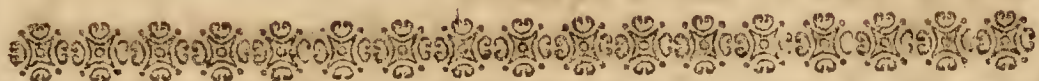
of malefactors, who expiate by their sufferings what is due to their crimes.

It is but too true that mankind are children all their life long; they are more easily made acquainted with their true interest by sensation, than by reason itself. A few only are persuaded when you speak to the understanding, but every one is moved when you speak to the heart.

Doubtless, the stage may contribute, more or less, to render a people humane or savage, brave or effeminate. Continually to behold the weaknesses of love cannot fail to soften the heart, and love has too often the chief place in our tragedies. Plays; should not, indeed, be political lectures; but it is to be wished, that they were, in all respects, a school to virtuous citizens. What service might not authors, who would always make this use of their talents, render to society? What glory might they not acquire? The Romans, the wisest people upon earth, placed the temple of renown behind the temple of virtue, to indicate that this must be passed through in order to arrive at the other. The publick interest is the sole dispenser of true glory: at least, the most shining reputation is that which is founded upon a merit useful to the happiness of the community.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

your most humble, &c.



L E T T E R LXXXIII.

To M. de MAUPERTIUS, of the royal academy of sciences, at Paris.

Character of his treatise on the figure of the earth. Opinion of the English concerning it. Their zeal for the name of Sir ISAAC NEWTON. Literary enthusiasm, two sorts of it. Exclusive tastes. National enthusiasm.

LONDON, &c.

S I R,

I AM sorry that I cannot give to my expressions all the vivacity of my sentiments, in order to return you thanks worthy of the present you have made me, and to prove how much I think myself honoured, by a testimony of friendship, from a man, who is in the highest esteem all over Europe. But no thanks of mine for your books; I am certain, can be half so valuable, as what I have to tell you: for what are they to the universal approbation of all England, of which I can send you my true testimony?

The English expected your work upon the figure of the earth with impatience, and they have received it with acclamations: they bestow

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equal

equal praise on the courage that prompted to make experiments alike painful and important, and upon the genius that led you to imagine the most simple and most sure way of succeeding. Whatever contradictions you may now meet with in France, be not afraid, sir, for they cannot last, and I am satisfied, that all the learned in Europe will very soon give the same judgment, as the English have already given, of the justice of your measures. The question you have decided concerning the figure of the earth, is, in the opinion of the judges here, so connected with that of attraction, that they will have it, you have determined both at the same time, which is, perhaps, the greatest glory that a philosopher can aspire to: NEWTON could be tried by his peers only, I do not mean as an Englishman, but as a man of a superior order.

The geometricians of this country regard your book as the confirmation of the gospel of their apostle, and look upon you, sir, as the happy mortal whom heaven had decreed to demonstrate by experience, the truths which sir ISAAC had discovered by his calculation. They hope, for the future, that nobody will refuse him all that veneration, which they pay to him themselves. You know the zeal of the English for the reputation of this author: they are as fond of spreading his name as his system; that is to say, in other words, the glory of their nation is as dear to them, as the lights of his philosophy.

They

They cannot be sufficiently applauded, for placing the warrior, who spilt his blood for his country, and the philosopher, who consecrated his studies to the instruction of human kind, on the side of each other. You must have seen with pleasure, in Westminster-abbey, the monument of sir ISAAC NEWTON, by the side of general STANHOPE; and you cannot but have heard, that they both were erected at the expence of the nation. But some critics have censured the stile of sir ISAAC's epitaph, as a little too emphatic,

GRATULENTUR SIBI MORTALES, TALE
AC TANTUM EXTITISSE HUMANI GE-
NERIS DECUS.

The words, they pretend, are a little too swelling, and perhaps much the same thing, might have been said in more simple expressions. But, in fact, the emphasis of this inscription does but literally express what the English think of this philosopher. They have often been blamed for their enthusiasm, in behalf of the great men of their nation; but for none of them all have they so much of it, as for this philosopher: perhaps, they have not even so much respect as they ought for the memory of chancellor BACON, the father of metaphysics and philosophy; to whom, in part, are owing the most happy discoveries of those who succeeded him, and who, in a word, prepared the way for both DESCARTES and sir ISAAC NEWTON.

The earl of Shaftesbury has left an excellent treatise upon enthusiasm, and I am sorry he speaks only of that kind which regards religion: philosophy has its enthusiasts also; or rather, men are so void of reason, that they heat themselves on every subject. The state of reason seems a state of restraint, and few are they who can abide long in it. The opposition that you have met with cannot but have taught you too well, that the spirit of party, so contrary to reason, does not less reign in matters of science, than in those of religion.

With what fury did not the partisans of ARISTOTLE break forth against those of DESCARTES? Did not the dispute concerning the merit of the ancients and moderns produce a true literary schism? How many things did it cause to be done on both sides, that were contrary to good faith? What hatred did it not engender? Enthusiasm of this kind is the fever of wit, and the shame of reason; nor is it even necessary, in order to excite it, that the object be of importance. Two sonnets, equally trifling and ingenious, formerly divided all Paris. They were reciprocally criticised by inflam'd understandings, and produced a war that grew ridiculous by being serious. Has not the dispute concerning verse and prose been since treated with the same animosity? And to come to what regards yourself, Do not attraction, and the vortices, at this time, make two parties in the academy of sciences, who are not less at enmity in heart, than divided in judgment?

judgment? How many of your opponents have been so for no other reason, but because you have embrac'd the system which you thought the best? 'Tis the temper of mankind, and scholars are men as well as others. Among the English, perhaps, most of NEWTON's admirers are so merely because he was their countryman: but we must allow, on the other hand, that many French reject him only for being an Englishman. Do not even some, who know nothing of his system, indulge themselves in jokes upon it, which are a scandal both to their wit and their understanding? How ridiculous does this national enthusiasm make men look? What signifies it who enlightens us, whether Englishman, Frenchman, or Italian, if he does but lead us to the sanctuary of truth?

In my opinion there are two kinds of enthusiasm. The first is the cause of all the fine things that are done, and without it no man can ever raise a reputation. Happy those, who like you, sir, are transported with this! The other, is that, which arises from esteem of the same things, and our admiration of those who are the authors of them. Men oftentimes push this second kind of enthusiasm to a degree beyond judgment; or rather, as the first is the mark of genius, the latter is commonly the proof of a narrow understanding.

The happy enthusiasm that produced such a poem as *Paradise Lost*, deserves all the praises that we can bestow on it; but would not

the enthusiasm of that reader be blameable, who should be so wrapt up in that work, as not to see it had any faults? The greatest part of mankind thus, by esteeming too much some certain art or science, become insensible of the greatest beauties of other kinds. Those who are immers'd in Greek and Latin, have often been justly blamed, that they do not set value enough upon the ingenious productions of our own age. Few antiquaries look for any thing else but its antiquity in a statue or bas relief. Madame DACIER had read the comedies of ARISTOPHANES over seventy times, and yet could not be perswaded that by the rules of good morality it was lawful to write operas.

What can be more ridiculous than these exclusive tastes; which, however, are so common, in favour of such a science, such an author, such a spectacle, or such a species of curiosities! Enthusiasm enters not only into indifferent things, but is usually in the greatest excess upon those matters that are only the objects of our amusement.

A connoisseur in pictures laughs at the florist; and he that is in love with shells throws his jokes upon the virtuoso in china ware. A mind accusom'd to the fine simplicity of the French musick, finds something ridiculous in the happy variety of the Italian; while the partisan of the latter pretends there is no tune in ours. Thus every man, without reserve, condemns that in every other, which is contrary to his own sentiment. He who goes constantly
to

to the play blames him that is daily at the opera, and he who sees a play only to make him laugh, maintains, that there can be no pleasure in weeping. The serious philosopher, to whom mirth is necessary, takes the part of comedy, and will have it, that tragedy is fit only for women and boys. I never knew an admirer of the actresses LE COUVREUR render justice to DU CLOS; and those who are fond of mademoiselle PELISSIER, are not more equitable to that divine LE MAURE, who is at this time the support of the opera, and the object of publick admiration. London has been divided in the same manner, upon the merit of FAUSTINA and CUZZONI, both excellent singers, and both reciprocally despised by those who delighted in an exclusive taste. The passionate adorers of the graces in mademoiselle SALLE' are absolutely insensible to the charms of mademoiselle CAMARGO's dancing. The old partisans of LULLY will not render justice to RAMEAU; and the friends of RAMEAU, in revenge, cry down the merit of the father of French music, without reflecting, that among those who have risen since, and who, but for him, had never perhaps risen so high, few have equall'd, none have surpass'd him. In a word, the admirers of CORNEILLE cannot bear that RACINE should be compar'd with him; and I have known some men so idolatrously fond of RACINE, as not to esteem the genius of the only French poet, that has been honoured with the title of Great. Instead of

rendering justice to both, in the parts where either has excelled, they give all to one, and refuse all to the other. Instead of admitting all tastes, they admit but their own. And thus every one would bring others to his own manner of thinking, or being affected; and takes his own opinion, or his own whimsey, for reason itself.

Hence, arises that heat in conversation, which is more expressive of a man's prepossession for his own opinion, than of his zeal for the truth. Exaggeration, falsehood, all is allowable to maintain one's cause. Two persons who dispute quietly upon any subject, while nobody interrupts them, when a third, whoever he be, puts in to judge between them, shall instantly change their tone, and, instead of explaining and supporting each his opinion, each will endeavour only to turn his adversary into ridicule. We like better to shut our eyes against truth, than let another have the advantage of shewing her to us. As the witnesses become more numerous, the voices grow more sharp, the conversation more earnest; or, if you will, more unreasonable; there is more animosity in the repartees, and more insincerity in the dispute. What strange tricks does our vanity play upon us! And how very ashamed should we often be, if we did but reflect, how little it makes us look in the eyes of others!

But what shall we say of those who are enthusiastical for or against any particular nation?

For

For example, the English, in my opinion, have always shewn as much prepossession against ours, as we have lately declared ourselves in favour of theirs. There are indeed, among them, some courtiers accused of being too much frenchified, as among us, many might be convicted of an unreasonable antipathy against the English. But in general, these haughty islanders are not less industrious to load us with ridicules, than we are earnest to heap applauses on them. They exaggerate our vices as we exaggerate their virtues. MOLIÈRE, and our good comic authors, applied themselves only to paint the defects of humanity in general, or of their own nation in general; but the English dramatic writers chuse rather to make their spectators laugh at our expence than at their own.

What can be more ridiculous than these national prepossessions and enmities! What, indeed, than enthusiasms of every kind! In very truth, mankind are most unreasonable beings. There is too much vanity in pretending to look with an eye of pity upon all their follies; but with a very little philosophy, it is exceeding difficult to avoid laughing at them.

I have the honour to be,

fir, your most humble, &c.

LET-



LETTER LXXXIV.

To the Abbé L. A. H * * *;

*Relation of a conversation between sir W * *
W * * and m. D * *, wherein several
particulars concerning the English constitution,
especially the election of members of parliament,
are discoursed of.*

STAMFORD, &c.

SIR,

WHEN a man lives in England, he becomes a politician without perceiving it: you have experienced this yourself, and your friend m. D * *, as much taken up as he is with other employments, knows the English government as if he had studied nothing else. Wherever he goes, you remember it well, he is talking of the affairs of the nation; and indeed, if, as a foreigner, one would avoid intermeddling with them, as a man one must be affected with every thing that regards humanity. The philosopher does not stop there: his mind, actuated by such great objects, takes a pleasure in considering them nearer; he examines what agreement there is between the laws and manners of the people, their natural disposition,

disposition, and the form of their government. He calculates, by the rules of policy, what is to be hoped for from the passions of different individuals to the common advantage. He weighs, in the balance of morality, how much liberty should be left to men, and how much constraint should be imposed on them, in order to render them more virtuous, that is to say, more happy. In the abuses of a government he traces out the vices of its constitution, and in the non-execution of the laws he discovers their insufficiency.

Your friend m. D** is a philosopher of this kind: two months ago we were together at London, in company with one of the most considerable chiefs of the opposition. You know, sir, what a figure sir W** W*** makes in the House of Commons, and that he is a gentleman not less jealous of the glory of his nation than zealous in the defence of her liberties. The news of the day fixed the subject of the conversation, of which I was content to be an auditor only: a man that sees the world only to instruct himself, must appear in this character more than in any other.

The city of L** has just now chosen for one of its representatives a young gentleman, whose least fault is the want of experience, which age only can give. The discourse turned entirely upon the too little attention of the English in the choice of those whom they entrust with the guardianship of their liberties, and I will give you as faithful a report of it

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as I am able. Perhaps the knowledge you have of the subject, and the interest you take in one of the interlocutors, will make the relation not unpleasant. It proves, I think, upon the whole, that the minister's credit would not be so mighty in the House of Commons, if the laws had taken all due precautions to hinder his influence in elections, and to deprive him of the means of corrupting electors.

Sir W * * attempting to palliate these defects of the English government, your friend said to him, " Sir, it seems surprising to us, that you receive into so venerable an assembly as yours, that you raise to a seat among your sages, that you entrust with the interests of a county, in a word, that you erect into the dignity of a legislator, any man, who by reason of his youth must be destitute of experience ; and who, perhaps, for want of understanding, is not capable of ever acquiring it. What service to his country can such a member do, as the city of L * * has just now chosen ?

Leave that to us, answered Sir W * *, with the flegm that is peculiar to his nation : you don't know so well as we all the merit of the man you speak of ; but had he as little as his antagonists would have made people believe, he would be still as useful to us as another, whose natural faculties and acquired knowledge were much greater. He is a man that we are sure of, and the party who chose him will always dispose of his voice. This is all we

we want. We are the council of the sovereign, and the senate of the nation: to give an act the force of a law, the voices are told, they are not weigh'd.

It would be rash in a foreigner, replied mr. D * *, to condemn what is done by such wise men as you; but one may be suffer'd to enquire, for the sake of information. I am surpris'd that your customs authorise what seems contrary to reason, and would not, perhaps, stand the test of an exact probity. I would ask you, if an honest man can promise to see always with the eyes of another, and if you can reasonably chuse a man, who is not able to see for himself, and sometimes, perhaps, incapable of thinking.

It is not necessary for him to think, interrupted sir W * *, who perceived the whole force of the objection; there are in the house a dozen heads, which think for all the rest, and so it is in all publick assemblies. A few chiefs always determine affairs, and the multitude follow them like so many sheep. Necessity obliges the greatest number to do what wisdom would teach them; because, having no light in themselves, they take proper guides to conduct them. If I was not afraid you would think me vain, gentlemen, I could tell you, that above twenty members do me the honour to regard me as their chief, and regulate themselves wholly by my advice.

The reply was seasoned with a compliment. They cannot be too much applauded, said m.

D * *,

D * *, if through discernment they have adopted your manner of thinking: happy is it for the nation, that those who are animated with zeal for the publick good, should direct the voice of others! But do not you, sir, perceive the inconvenience that might arise, should those blind senators follow a guide less enlightened? Besides, he that has the good luck, by chance, to espouse the wisest party, is not so useful to his country, as a man, who like you, has the talent to make that wisdom understood by others. He will give you his voice when called upon: but a man that had more knowledge and experience, and who could defend the cause he had embraced, might, after your example, influence a number of suffrages by his. You are alarmed, because the partisans of the court are always the strongest in parliament; and because this superiority continually causes acts to pass, which you think contrary to the interests of the people: perhaps this too is only because a dozen heads dispose of all the rest, who like machines, follow the impression that is made upon them.

Sir W * * pretended, that in both parties, the decision depending on the chiefs only, the compensation of those who had authority only from their number, established in that respect a sort of equality.

Your friend returned to the charge, and made use, with advantage, of the arms that were furnished him both by his general knowledge of mankind, and his particular acquaintance

ance with the English. My respect for you, fir W * *, quoth he, is so great, that I cannot oppose your opinion but with pain : nor indeed is it to contradict you, that I speak again ; but only to intreat you to clear my doubts. Is the balance in reality so very equal as it appears at the first sight ? Those of the opposite party to yours are always of one opinion, which is that of the minister. You are not so unanimous on your side, and the different opinions of your leaders turn all to his advantage. The members devoted to the court, who stand much in the same degree of merit with him that gave rise to this conversation, are they not a more certain resource than yours to him who disposes of them ? If elevated souls are ambitious, those of common cast are avaritious. The court has dignities and titles to promise, places and pensions to give, in order to keep steady those that are in it's party. You are but too well acquainted with a truth of which you so often complain*. In your party, fir, you have nothing to engage those who have once embraced it, to continue faithful. To draw them off,

* When the list was published of the members of the House of Commons, who voted for and against the famous convention with the Spaniards, among those who were for the affirmative, there appeared 200,000 *l.* sterling per annum in places, pensions, &c. *See the critical history of the administration of sir Robert Walpole, now earl of Orford.* Printed for J. Hinton in St. Paul's Church-yard.

An English author pretends, that the number of places and employments, ecclesiastical, civil, and military, which the court has in its disposal, amounts to above 20,000 *l.*

off, the minister immediately throws before them such baits, as either self-love or avarice cannot long resist, the baits of greatness or riches.

Honour, and the love of our country, resumed the baronet with a deal of vivacity, do the same on our side, as ambition and interest do on the side of the court.

They ought to do it, but do not, pursued his antagonist. Have we not just now two recent instances of it, one in each house? Have not the D * of * * *, who was so much relied on in the House of Peers, and mr. * *, who had so many years declaimed in yours against the ministry, both changed their manner of thinking, the first for a regiment, and the latter for a pension? Will not such desertions naturally happen in the House of Commons, unless such gentlemen only are chosen members, as, like you, are zealous for liberty, and prefer the interest of their country to their own? But I cannot believe, that men of a moderate capacity are guided by such elevated motives, and can raise themselves to such a noble pitch of virtue. The probity of a man void of understanding ought always to be suspected: his zeal is always a kind of enthusiasm, his constancy is nothing but obstinacy, and his disinterestedness itself often proves to be only insensibility.

If there are always some young gentlemen seen in the House of Peers, that is a privilege of their birth, and the laws have appointed

appointed the age at which they may take their seats. But in the House of Commons, the most important of the two, and where you have the liberty of chusing, you ought not to entrust the interests of a town or a county to any man, but he that passes for one of the wisest, most knowing, and most independent men in it.

You reproach your neighbours for admitting among those, who dispose of their fortunes, and sometimes of their lives, young gentlemen, who study law at the opera, and spend more time at their toilet, than in examining the causes which they are to determine; in a word, who have nothing about them of their profession, not even the habit, which they disguise as much as possible. Our answer to this is, that it is a misfortune we groan under, but which the venality of places has render'd almost inevitable.

But how does it happen, that in a nation where good sense abounds, where the spirit of liberty reigns, and where zeal for the publick is an honour; that a people equally interested and free in the choice of those, to whom they confide the guardianship of their privileges, should so often repose their all upon men, who have none of the necessary qualities for this great trust? Your representatives in parliament are men of much greater consequence than our officers of justice. The French counsellors and presidents are magistrates, who being the depositaries of the sovereign authority, usually

give sentence only concerning the fortunes of particular persons ; they are not even allowed ; to deviate from the laws which are their rules. But you parliament-men are the legislators of your nation ; you have the interests of the state, and the prosperity or misery of the people in your own hands. “ A senator of Great-Britain, as you have said yourself, is invested “ with as much dignity and power as any individual could ever enjoy, in the most free “ and most illustrious republick ; upon his “ voice, which may determine the plurality of “ suffrages, depend the lives, the liberties, and “ the fortunes of his countrymen.” You even think, that “ he may dispose not only of the “ liberty of his country, but even of that of “ a great part of Europe,” whose fate you imagine depends upon your deliberations. The doors of the House of Commons, therefore, ought not to be open to any thing but love of the publick good, and zeal for liberty : but when the time comes for filling it, nothing is seen on either side but opposition and intrigue, in which less regard is paid to the most worthy, than to him that is richest. A wealthy brewer, who has stock in hand to make the populace drunk, will carry the day from a man who has the greatest talent, and the most upright intentions. Is it not strange, that people should chuse for their representative, a man, of whom they know neither the fortune nor the character ; nay, sometimes, even not the person ? Much more natural surely would it be, to treat

treat him as a fool or a madman, who under such circumstances should ask their vote? What then ought we to think of those who give it so inconsiderately?

The election of members for the lower house, in order to maintain the present constitution, will certainly be always the most important business of the English nation; and yet, alas! it is at present the most neglected. Your ancestors paid their deputies; but you generally suffer them to be in the wages of the court. Now the people, by making their votes vendible, oblige the candidates to buy them; which brings your elections to much the same venal state as our courts of justice: for you cannot deny, sir, that five thousand pounds, whether given in a lump, or divided in many parcels, if it be purchase-money, is the same thing: the place is bought, and the money was worth what it was paid for.

The force of truth obliged sir W * * to confess all these abuses. But, what, said he, in some confusion, do you infer from hence? That we are men, and we never pretended to be angels. Were there not means at Rome to corrupt the votes of the people? If the legislature ought to foresee all consequences, the laws cannot prevent them all; the same depravation that renders them necessary, sometimes renders them hurtful. These are evils that may easily be perceived, but the remedies for them are not so soon discovered.

You know that your friend Mr. D * * * being used to geometrical exactness, will not give up his point without demonstration. I allow with you, said he, both the defects of humanity, and the perfection of your government. I am willing to believe, that every time the parliament have taken in hand to correct those abuses, they have chosen the wisest way to succeed, and that the evil is without remedy, since all the attempts to find one have hitherto been fruitless. It would ill become a foreigner to censure the wisdom of your laws: May I dare, however, in order to finish this conversation, to propose to you some expedients, which perhaps, will in part obviate these pernicious abuses?

Might not the parliament, by a resolution, annul the election of every man convicted of having given money for his seat, and deprive every elector convicted of receiving it, of his future vote? Might not they prohibit the peasants, and other low people, who sell their votes for a pot of beer, to drink any but what they paid for during a fortnight before the election, and take away the right of voting, for that time, from every man who was proved to be drunk in that whole period? Might they not declare those who enjoy places or pensions at court, incapable of being elected, and exclude from the house those who accept them after their election? Do you think so ill of mankind; sir, as to imagine they must be an-
gels

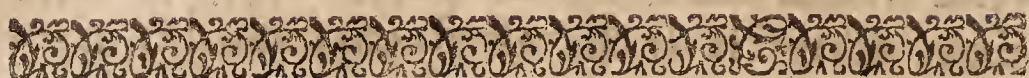
gels to establish and maintain such regulations? What would you not have to fear from an ambitious king, if it be true, that the minister can make every thing pass in parliament by dint of money?

Hold there, sir, interrupted sir W* *, with more fire than he had hitherto shewn, though you live among us, you are now fallen into the error of all foreigners on this subject. You are unacquainted with the virtue of the English. We maintain sixteen thousand land-soldiers, when our navy is alone sufficient to guard us; our taxes are higher than they ought to be; and in a word, we grant the king many things which we ought to refuse him. But our liberty still remains; the English courage is always the same, and we should spill the last drop of our blood, rather than suffer any attack to be made upon it.

Thus ended the dispute, which politeness did not permit to purge farther. But does it appear to you certain, sir, that the English will always be able to preserve this liberty, which they esteem so precious? By too many concessions may they not destroy the balance between the rights of the king, and those of his subjects, rendering the prince too powerful, and the people too weak? Their courage indeed remains; but what a shocking extremity is it to be driven into a civil war!

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXXXV;

To the Marquis of LOMELLINI.

Declaration of war against Spain, in opposition to the minister. Use that England makes of her advantages. The principal sources of her trade. History of commerce in England and France. Remarks on the tobacco and corn which the French take from us. Decay of trade in the Italian republicks, and rise of it among the Dutch. English folly with regard to French fashions. Balance of commerce how known. Advantage of the English colonies.

LONDON, &c.

MY LORD MARQUIS,

THE party of the opposition begins to triumph, and the king has been oblig'd to declare war against Spain. I have no thoughts of surprising you with this news: what are we private men to instruct those who are formed to penetrate the secrets of cabinets?

Prince CANTEMIR, just before his departure, saw the springs which have brought about this great event, prepared and put in motion. He knew the politicks and resources of the faction, which have got the upper-hand, and

was,

was, I believe, convinc'd, that their resentment was directed against sir ROBERT WALPOLE, as much as against the Spaniards: they hope, by a war, to obtain what they could never get by a peace: they plunge the nation into trouble and confusion, to perplex the man who governs it: they seem to think, they cannot buy his fall at too dear a rate; though perhaps it would be a loss not easily repaired. It passes for a certain truth, that those who would succeed him, are not men of better intentions than he, and it is doubted if they are equally capable.

I must tell you, however, that this act of rigour or weakness in the English government, has caused such a joy in the nation, as success only, which is always uncertain, can properly justify. The party which has at last prevail'd, has long declaim'd violently against pacific measures; and the step that a good number of merchants were induced to take, of delivering to the parliament their complaints against the Spaniards, effectually heated all minds. The populace, who follow the impressions made on them, without perceiving how they are made, had but one cry, which was for war. They did not perceive, that when their drunken fit should be over, they might change their opinion, and see themselves reduc'd, by time, to put up fruitless vows for a peace.

Without pretending to judge between the Spaniards and English, I will take upon me to

ay, that the latter would fain carry on all the commerce of Europe alone. Sir WILLIAM PETTY, whose calculations are often chimerical, thinks, he has demonstrated that England has funds enough for this undertaking. The English look upon their pretensions, in this respect, as so many rights, and the rights of their neighbours they treat as usurpations.

England is attentive to make the most of the advantages of her situation: she is an island, placed as it were for the center of commerce, and can draw lines from her ports to the east, the west, the north, or the south. Her inhabitants are a race of men equally brave, strong, and industrious. Her havens are numerous and excellent.

The sea which environs her, gives her people all the facilities of transporting the merchandizes of their own country, and bringing in those of others at the lowest expence. Having a great extent of coasts, she has of necessity a great number of mariners. The people on the continent, to defend themselves one against another, are obliged to fortify towns, and keep up standing armies: But the English, by their men of war only, are sufficiently covered against the invasion of an enemy. Their *wooden walls*, which is the name they give them, are the only fortresses they have need of; so that all the expences which the government need to be at, for the security of the state, tends immediately to the advantage of commerce.

The

The soil in England is fruitful enough : even in those places where it seems to be barren it is enrich'd with mines of tin, lead, copper, &c. The trade of pit-coal from Newcastle is the nursery of English seamen, and herring and cod-fisheries on their coast are another bounteous present of nature.

Their wool is the most precious of all their treasures, and affords the most extensive branch of their commerce. Leather is also a considerable article. But it must be owned, that the natural productions of this country do not, at the most, amount to a fourth part of her riches : the rest she owes to her colonies, and the industry of her inhabitants, who by the transportation and exchange of the riches of other countries augment continually their own. Their establishments in America alone employ above four hundred ships.

The northern nations were late before they applied to trade, and the English marine was nothing at the time when your republick was mistress of the sea. From the reign of WILLIAM I, down to queen ELIZABETH, they were less employed in enriching their isle, the most sure way of augmenting their power, than in making of conquests upon the continent, which only flatter'd the vanity of their sovereigns.

King EDWARD III, was the first of the successors of WILLIAM the Conqueror, who appears to have turned his thoughts towards commerce. In the parliament held at Westminster,

minster, Anno 1338, he forbad the sending of wool out of the kingdom, and gave many privileges to foreign workmen to invite them over.

Under the glorious reign of ELIZABETH the commerce and marine of England made a considerable progress; and, What was the consequence? This queen, having by her fleets made herself mistress of the seas, became also the arbiter of Europe. She established a Turkey-Company: she opened to her subjects a new trade to Archangel, by a treaty she made with the Grand Duke of Muscovy. The English founded colonies in America, and cultivated in them tobacco and sugar, which, by degrees, put them in a condition of supplanting the Portuguese.

CROMWELL, as great a man as could be without virtue, after having got possession of the supreme authority under the title of Protector, made England taste the fruits of his government, by rendering her more flourishing at home by her trade, and more redoubtable abroad by her maritime power. The regulations he made, to hinder the different nations, which trade to England, from bringing thither any goods but those which their own countries severally produce, was one of the wisest laws that policy could dictate to him for the good of a people, who were never less free, than while under his protection, nor more powerful than while he held them under his yoke.

The

The glory, the happiness, the riches of a nation, all depend upon him that governs it. LEWIS XI, by delivering his subjects from the tyranny of the great men, bestowed on them a real advantage in the augmentation of his own power. If the necessity of the state obliged him to load his people with new taxes, his prudence enabled him to invent new were resources to supply them. He endeavoured to make trade flourish in his kingdom. The fairs held in his time at Geneva were very prejudicial to France. He established the like at Lyons, and in order to draw the foreign merchants thither, granted them the same privileges as his own subjects. The fairs at Geneva were a gulph that swallowed up all the money in the kingdom; but these became a source, which drew into it the gold of our neighbours.

HENRY IV, one of the greatest kings of our monarchy, was also one of those who contributed the most to the increase of our commerce. He caused mulberry-trees to be planted in France, and erected manufactures both of silk and linen. M. COLBERT followed, and perfected the plans that had been drawn out by the wisdom of HENRY IV, and which had been too much neglected in the following reign. Wholly employed, as he was, for the publick good, this minister did, indeed, find himself exposed to popular injustice: but what glory has he not acquired from posterity! He will always have a place amongst the greatest men of our nation. We have prosper'd in
trade,

trade, only in proportion as we have followed his maxims. By extending the limits of his kingdom, a prince often only raises to himself new enemies; but the making it richer, without alarming his neighbours, is the most certain way to enable himself to give them law.

With regard to the present commerce of England, you know, sir, that in Italy the balance is wholly against them. This is proved by the considerable remittances of money they are obliged to make thither, either to Genoa or Venice.

Since a prince of the house of Bourbon has ascended the throne of Spain, their trade with that nation is much more disadvantageous to them than it was before. The balance is also against them, in what trade they have with Flanders, Germany, and other kingdoms of the north. But Holland, Portugal, Africa, and the East Indies, repay them again with interest what they lose to other nations.

Unhappily for the English, we, of all their neighbours, are those whom they love the least, and who yet are the most necessary to them. They see, with regret, that in the trade they have with us, the balance turns prodigiously in our favour, and that it is our own fault, if we do not make this balance yet greater.

We take from the English a great quantity of tobacco, and in time of scarcity abundance of corn. I doubt not, but in time, the wisdom of the ministry will find remedies for these

these inconveniencies: for on the one hand, the soil of France is so fertile, that if we profited by the example of our neighbours, we should never be in danger of wanting corn: and on the other, we know by experience that we have colonies in America, as favourable to the plantation of tobacco as those of the English. Such is Louisiana. We have already got from them the sugar trade, and it would not be more difficult to make ourselves masters of this also: At least, why should we buy that of our neighbours, with which we can supply ourselves?

Such establishments will perhaps require great advances from the government; but what advantages might not be drawn from them in the sequel? It is necessary in trade to imitate the wise oeconomy of the farmer, who does not complain of the expence of manuring and sowing his lands, because he is sure of having his money back with interest.

It were to be wished, that the farmers-general of the taxes, who have the regulation of the tobacco trade, and buy it of the English or Dutch, could be engaged to buy that of our own colonies: they might be reimburs'd what they lost in the beginning, and it is certain, that they would in time find the general and their own private interest united by that means. This would considerably augment our trade, and consequently the customs, of which they have the direction. Such a company might be more useful to the state than some people think,

think, who look upon all the jokes which envy makes them level at rich men, as so much wit. Their credit has an influence upon government, and is a kind of publick fund that may be always of service in time of need. The springs of the treasury are not the least necessary, nor the least powerful, in moving the machine of the state; but care should be always taken, that they do not obstruct the springs of commerce. It is the perfect harmony of both together that makes money circulate, and is the only means of continuing an abundance.

The attention of the English to whatever may be for their advantage, should serve for an example to their neighbours. They have a long time, sir, been meditating on a project, which, if it should succeed, will be very prejudicial to you: it is to plant mulberry-trees in their colonies, in order to lessen the quantity of silk which they are obliged to buy from Italy. They do not neglect even matters of the least importance. If I may believe what I have heard in Bretagne, they had the perseverance, for many years, to come annually to the rock of Cancal, near St. Malo, and load vessels with oysters, in order to throw them into the sea again upon their own coasts. The oysters which they had thus sown, if I may use that expression, in progress of time, say they, produced the Bank of Colchester, where the oysters now taken are look'd upon to be the most delicate in Europe, and

and fetch a very high price at Paris. I do not pretend to attest this fact; nor do I even know if it be agreeable to good philosophy: but what the Bretons think is at least a proof that those people have a high opinion of the English vigilance.

Wool is the only commodity which the French want out of England, and the English have a more indispensable need of our wines and brandies *. Independantly of the natural advantages, which our climate gives us over the English in our trade with them, their fondness for fashions is another essential article: it is a kind of tribute which their folly pays to ours, and which all the efforts of their policy have not been able to abolish. They even spare us the trouble of laying snares for them. They blame us thro' caprice, and imitate us thro' taste. Equally smitten as we are with all novelties, they are obliged to adopt ours, because their workmen execute well but do not invent.

Under CHARLES II, when the court of England affected the French manners, the English workmen counterfeited our manufactures as they appeared. But scarce had they made one pattern succeed, before the mode introduced something new at Paris, which soon finding its way to London, run down the value of what had been there wrought. This obliged the manufacturers to give over an employment they could not live by. King WIL-

LIAM,

* Few Englishmen will set their hands to this doctrine.

LIAM, even in war, could not entirely remedy this evil. The sole effect of the acts of parliament, which forbid, under severe penalties, the importation of French commodities, has been only to make our ribbands and laces sell for higher prices.

Does not your republick find occasion for all its wisdom, to prevent the like abuse from getting footing among you? There is but too much inclination at Genoa to imitate our manners. If the severity of your laws proves the attention of your senators to the publick good, it at the same time indicates a propensitty in private persons to deviate from it.

Those who wonder and complain, that in France, for some years past, there are some people of easy fortunes, both men and women, who cloath themselves in silk during the winter as well as the summer, do not consider that our southern provinces are at this time so planted with mulberry-trees, that they often contribute much to the carrying on of our manufactures, and that we cannot find vent for the superfluity of our cloths in the Levant, if we do not receive in return the superfluities of the silks in those countries with which we traffic. Besides, most of the rich silks that are wrought at Lyons, are sold abroad. Happy for us, the foreigners love our modes, and seem to come to Paris only to study our tastes. At their return home they fancy nothing well made but what comes from France. HEBERT, LA DU CHAPT,
and

and MARCEL, are perhaps, the three best known persons in Paris to the Germans.

It is impossible that luxury should not reign, more or less, in a country that is rich and commercial. If through an excess of frugality, a people should renounce all foreign commodities, which they could do without, what would they do with the superfluities of their own? What would become of their manufactures? It is our interest to encourage all those which draw to us the money of our neighbours.

Manufactures and arts are the principal supports of commerce. The Spaniards, thro' neglect of them, are poor, amid all the gold of the Indies. Furniture, equipages, and other expences of those persons who have a taste for magnificence, and the means to satisfy that taste, cannot impoverish a nation when they employ its own materials, and when the excess of what is wrought draws from abroad sufficient to maintain the workmen. The poor are thus kept by the money of the rich, which is the most equal distribution of society.

In all nations whatsoever, those to whom the government entrusts the care of trade ought with the utmost attention to distinguish the canals that bring riches in from those that carry them out. The same taste for luxury that draws wealth into one country, may exhaust that of another. Frugality is a moral virtue; but, in the eyes of policy,

it is often less advantageous to society than industry.

Money is not only the true standard of the intrinsic riches of any state; it is also the measure of its advantage or disadvantage in foreign commerce. The only way to judge of the augmentation or diminution of the funds of public treasure, is to examine whether our neighbours bring us their money, or carry away ours.

The constitution of the English government, by admitting merchants, as well as gentlemen of landed interest, into the house of commons, has wisely provided for the good of its commerce. They know what is the balance of it with foreigners, and perceive what branches of it may be advantageous to their nation. They have it in their power to watch over trade, and propose the necessary regulations. These were the men, who, under king WILLIAM III, caused flax and hemp to be sown in Ireland, and established the linen manufactures, in order to lessen the quantities which they had been obliged to take from France.

It is in vain for a man to read treaties of commerce in his closet: he may indeed learn what it is, but not how to conduct it. There is in every thing a mechanic part, which use only can teach. Science is every where a great advantage, and perhaps it is impossible to excel in any art without possessing the theory of it: but this theory, without

without practice, ought not to be trusted. Books would as soon make a perfect physician as an able merchant.

The spirit of the laws is too inflexible to give way to all that freedom which commerce requires, and that is often look'd upon as illegal gain which only bears a proportion to the risque that was run by the adventurer. Sometimes a man is found culpable when in fact he is only unfortunate. It is for the general utility, therefore, that regard should be always had to what is just or expedient in particular cases. Our jurisdiction of consuls, a tribunal that has been found so wisely erected, is a proof that trade cannot always be treated by the common laws of a country.

The discovery of a new way to the East Indies thro' the Ocean, and that of America, which made us acquainted with new riches and new necessities, have entirely changed the face of Europe with regard to commerce. That of your republic and Venice is considerably diminished. Holland, a small country, is at this day a formidable power. Spain, an immense country, is become a weak state, and has been depopulated in proportion as it has grown rich. But the true riches of a country are the men, and their labour.

The Spaniards have large tracts of lands, especially in Arragon and Castile, cover'd with oaks of extraordinary size, and firs proper to make masts: but that indolence, to which the wealth of America has accustom'd

them, causes them rather to let this wealth go among foreigners, than take the least pains about any thing.

How much more vigilant and active are the English? They have established a trade of timber between their colonies and Portugal, which is very advantageous to their mother country.

It is observed that the Portuguese themselves are become much less industrious since the discovery of the gold and silver mines in Brasil. They have left the English to take possession of the Caribbee islands, from whence they draw sugar and indigo, not for their own consumption only, but to supply their neighbours.

What a rich conquest for England was Jamaica, which alone is bigger than all their other American islands! The soil here is extremely fertile, and the country, by its situation, exceedingly favourable to the contraband trade, which they carry on to the prejudice of the Spaniards; a trade which many people look upon as the first cause of the war that has just been declared, and of which, perhaps, we may not soon see an end.

The troubles about religion, and the civil wars that for a long time tore the bowels of England, were in part the cause of the flourishing condition their American colonies are now in; a condition that may with some reason

reason give umbrage to the government. They are already too powerful for England always to depend upon their obedience. Acts of parliament have not the force of laws among them till after being revised by the inhabitants of these colonies themselves.

Before the English had establishments in the new world, those among them who were disturbed took refuge in Switzerland, Denmark, and the Hans towns, whereby their country lost them for ever: but America hath since offered an asylum to those that were persecuted, where they have been more useful to their native country than if they had continued to live in it.

How happy had it been for us if those protestants, who were driven out of the kingdom by the revocation of the edict of Nantes, had in the same manner taken refuge in our colonies! They had not then carried to our neighbours our chief riches, I mean our manufactures. The relations they had kept up with France would have continued them in the same habit of looking upon it still as their native country; and tho' separated from us by religion, they would still have been united to us by the bonds of policy. Being interested in the glory of their nation, of which they would then have continued a part, they would have persevered in labouring still for its advantage. In the remote parts of America they would have had French

hearts; whereas they are now, at our very doors, our most cruel enemies.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXXXVI.

TO M. DE MONTCRIF,

Of the French Academy;

The Abbé's love of solitude. Upon the art of pleasing. Different sentiments and practice of the French and English with regard to that art. English women and clergy.

STAMFORD, &c.

SIR,

IN the midst of the great world where you live, and among extravagancies and avocations of all kinds; happy is it for you that you can still converse with the muses! How beautiful, above all, does it appear, that you are not forgetful of your old friends! For my part, I lead here a plain life, uniform, and detach'd from all human vanities. There are times in which solitude is necessary to me: I love to live now in town, now in the country: the croud of the world and the silence of retreat please me alternately. These changes of situation, which vary and
renew

renew the affections of the soul, are always agreeable to her. She has sometimes need of the most simple amusements to unbend her. The gravity of philosophy did not hinder Socrates from playing with children.

As I go into the country only to enjoy the charms of retreat, I take little notice of those sumptuous edifices, which are but so many temples consecrated to disquietude: I shun as much as possible those vast apartments, where numbers meet only to sacrifice to this goddess. That crowd of servants, which is every day to be seen in great houses, gives me disgust. I inhabit a small hermitage in the recess of a wood, upon the borders of a fountain; and round this humble roof every thing breathes pleasure and innocence: here it is that I philosophize alone, enjoy myself, and contemplate the wonders of nature: in a word, I am happy, while under gilded cornishes, in the midst of good cheer and gaming, others are buried in the vapours. That I am so fond of retreat, is, because it has the same effect upon me as it had upon MONTAGNE. Permit me to use his own expressions, which have something stronger in them than I could hope to give you. “ Local solitude (says he) more
“ readily dilates, and enlarges me without: I
“ throw myself into affairs of state, and of
“ the universe, more freely when I am alone.
“ At the Louvre, and in a crowd, I am
“ squeez’d up, and straightened within my
“ skin; the press drives me into myself, and

“ I never behave so madly, so licentiously, and
 “ at the same time so privately, as when I
 “ am in places of respect and ceremonious
 “ prudence. It is not our foibles that make
 “ me laugh, but our wise gravities.”

I confess, in spite of all the taste I have
 for a country life, that it gives something of a
 rudeness to the manners. Men are so much the
 more clownish as they live more remote from
 cities, and associate less together. The habit
 of politeness is easily lost in solitude, and for
 this reason I am truly obliged to you for the
 present you have made me of your *Essay upon*
the Necessity and Means of pleasing. After ha-
 ving read it once with pleasure, I shall read it
 over again with profit. I shall make use of it as
 a preservative against that rust, which I may
 contract either while I am buried here in my
 retreat, or among the fox-hunters, with
 whom I sometimes keep company.

As you have lived heretofore in this coun-
 try, you must have perceived that none of
 their characteristical virtues of the English, is
 that probity so essential in the commerce of
 life. Their first meeting gives you no preju-
 dice in their favour; but when you once
 know them, you find among them the same
 friendship and kind sentiments as in other na-
 tions. They cannot be too much praised on
 this head; for sentiments are the finest orna-
 ments of humanity. But unhappily they do
 not reckon mutual attentions and regards to-
 wards each other among the virtues: they
 despise

despise the acquisition of those polite and insinuating manners which conciliate to us the good will of others, and which by a quite opposite excess we often put even in the place of sentiments. The desire of pleasing is here seldom found among the great, and absolutely unknown to the vulgar. Most of the English look upon the rules of knowing how to live as a yoke that renders life incommodious.

This is a country of liberty, where every one piques himself upon letting nothing constrain him. So far are they from concealing a natural disposition that is unpleasant, that they add to their other faults that of endeavouring to appear singular. They enter into no society, but on the condition of being free in it; that is, of having no regard one for another. He of whom it can be said that he gives himself no pain, is certainly a man proud of his clownishness. Almost all the vices introduce themselves into the world under the names of virtues. In some countries an insolent brutality passes for freedom, and in others the meanness of flattery is called politeness.

Among us, a man that would make his fortune must study to please: here, he that endeavours to please must begin by making his fortune. In France, a rich man tries to advance himself at court: in England, such a man is prevented in his application. Whoever has a great fortune is of more importance

tance here than he would be in any other country. It is thro' wealth that a peer of the kingdom is able to make head against the minister, and that a merchant becomes a member of parliament. In what state soever a man is, therefore, instead of studying to please, he thinks only how to grow rich, and is then sure of pleasing sufficiently. Interest is a god adored in all countries; but I believe he is no-where served with more devotion than in England: he has a temple as solidly built, at least, as Liberty itself, and certainly it is a great deal more frequented.

According to the diversity of manners in different countries, the notions are different upon the same things. He who in Paris is called an amiable man, is in London called only a trifler; what we call wit, the English call nonsense; and what to us seems pleasant, is in their eyes nothing but folly. Here are to be found none of that kind of men, so common among us, who, instead of aspiring to make their fortunes, found their whole ambition upon the goodness of their birth, and think the pleasure of being wish'd for and sought after in all companies, is the greatest happiness of their lives. Such a creature would appear ridiculous to the English, who stick to the solid part, and think that nothing gives a man credit but his riches. It is this species of merit that eclipses every other. A man one day told a story that did not seem probable, and somebody in company

pany took the liberty to let him know that he doubted the truth of what had been advanced.

“ Sir, answered the relator, I had it from a
“ Kentish gentleman of four thousand pounds
“ a year.” A man cannot oppose such a reason as this.

The women partake much of the same way of thinking as the men. Those who are addicted to gallantry do not confine the art of pleasing to agreeable behaviour, complaisance, sollicitudes, and flatteries: all these things appear to them just as they are, as mere trifles. Most of those who among us pass for men of good fortune in amours, would with difficulty succeed in addressing an English fair. She would not be sooner subdued by the insinuating softness of their jargon, than by the amber with which they are perfumed. The Irish officers, those happy mortals, whom the rich dowagers will sometimes hunt after among the dregs of the people, in order to marry them, seldom owe their gift of pleasing to the charms of their wit and manners.

Besides, the English, who are most of them addicted to philosophy, look upon this tenderness and complaisance to the fair as something beneath them. It did very well, they say, for the ages of ignorance, when among them, as well as elsewhere, there were doughty knights and gallant adventurers. Since that time the men are become less complaisant, and the women, by degrees, are grown less difficult. They are now obliged

bliged to take such as they can find. The French are often gallant without being amorous: the English are always amorous without being gallant.

Tho' in this nation the art of pleasing is very little studied, there is one particular class of men to be distinguish'd from the rest, whom necessity obliges to endeavour to acquire this art; I mean, the ecclesiasticks. Those who look after a bishoprick are obliged to be courteous by profession. They aim at the very pink of politeness; but are usually so affected and ridiculous in what they attempt, that it commonly serves for an object of raillery at court. Here, as you well know, a man of quality seldom takes upon him orders: they are obliged to give the largest benefices to collegians, who never lose the customs they contract at college, and, tho' exceeding attentive to copy those of the world, are nevertheless very clumsy in their imitation. Pedantry seems to be the indelible character imprinted on them. The turn of their writings, as well as of their discourses, discovers plainly a design to please in them; but they are all the while far from knowing the art. One of them, who preach'd one day at court, said at the end of his sermon, " that those who did not mend their lives
" upon what he had said, would to all eternity
" dwell in a place which politeness did not
" permit

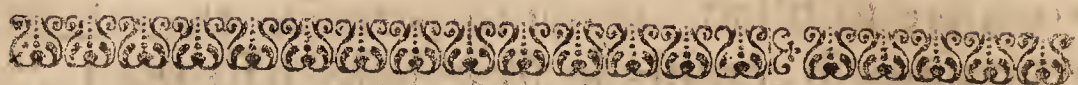
“ permit him to mention in so illustrious an
“ assembly.”

Before I conclude my letter, I return to your work, and must tell you, sir, that as MONTAGNE trusted more to the virtue of his temperament than to that acquired by his reflexions, so I had much rather possess the gift than the art of pleasing. One is acquired with difficulty, and often fails us on occasion: the other costs nothing, and is always sure. Of all men, those who please the most generally are the men bless'd with gaiety and sweetness, without any mixture of vanity. A man of this character does not want even wit to make him relish'd by all the world. On the contrary, a melancholy man may make himself esteemed, but seldom beloved. A man born without gaiety must have a great deal of merit to succeed in society. Happy are those who please without any expence to themselves! But I did not perceive that I was entering upon a subject which it becomes you only to treat; a man must possess the means of pleasing, to be able to teach them to others.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.

L E T-



L E T T E R LXXXVII.

To the Abbé L. A. H* *;

English too much politicians. Thoughts concerning morality, policy, true liberty, and other points that regard the English constitution.

LONDON, &c.

S I R,

IF it be true, that in France the men of good understanding do not apply themselves enough to politicks, it is certain, that in England those of a common level busy themselves therein too much. This study disorders more heads than it regulates, because it demands an application, which the majority of mankind are not equal to, and such lights, as but very few men have an opportunity of acquiring.

Those principles that are the basis of morality, are very simple, and nature has engraved them in all hearts: those that are the foundation of politicks are so compounded, that after the experience of all nations and ages, they have not yet been stated to general satisfaction. While the former, in vain, teaches men that they should not do to others what they

they would not have done to themselves, and men are so blind, as not to perceive that their true interest consists in so acting: it is the business of policy, by the most prudent means to bring them to their duty, and confine them within the bounds of justice, whether they will or no. But easy at it is to prescribe what particulars owe to the society, for the advantages they enjoy from it; no less difficult is it to regulate what the society owes to each particular, for those advantages it draws from their mutual concurrence, in promoting the common utility; since, according to times and circumstances, it is sometimes necessary to sacrifice private to the general interest, and that in all cases the safety of the people is the supreme law.

You, sir, are one of that small number of chosen men, who are formed to examine with profit, both to themselves and their fellow-citizens, a matter so delicate and important. The subtlety and sagacity of your wit, the extent of your knowledge, and the connexions you have had with the greatest politicians in England, enable you more than another man to dive into the depths of an art, which may be called the completion of human wisdom.

If we believe some authors, who have written upon the English government, the word *liberty*, which has caused so many disputes, and so much bloodshed in this country, is not, even at this time, well understood. It is in general true, as HOBBS has remarked, that
when

when private persons or subjects demand liberty, what they mean by it is dominion, or the sovereign power, of which, however, their ignorance renders them entirely incompetent. You know, that while the writers of the discontented party complain, that liberty exists no longer in England, others exaggerate that which reigns there at present, and applaud it in such high terms, that one would think the English government had nothing to fear from the vicissitudes and revolutions, to which all human institutions are subject.

True liberty is that which exempts a man from subjection to another, as much as the order of the society will premit. It does not give to every particular the privilege of doing just what he pleases, but only of doing every thing that is not contrary to the general good. As the strength of it arises from the laws, where the laws may be violated with impunity, it cannot be said that liberty has a very solid foundation. Every attack upon the laws gives a shock to it; and in some instances those attacks have not been at first attended to, which, at last; have given it the fatal blow. Thus this goodly edifice, built with so much art and care, sometimes moulders away at the very time when danger is the least apprehended.

If liberty consists in a variety of religious worships, and an unbridled licence of speaking and writing, the people of England may be said to enjoy it more fully than any people upon earth ever did. But perhaps, in the
con sti-

constitution of perfect liberty something more is wanted than an empty sound, and unbounded indulgence to the tongue and the pen.

In fact, ought those to be called free, who are the slaves of ambition or interest? No sooner have they barter'd their liberty for riches and honours, but they have in truth alienated it. And have not all free states been subdued in this manner?

Those to whom a nation entrusts the precious deposit of liberty, may soon sacrifice the publick to their private interest; and as they have the right of making laws, all those that they may be pleased to enact, may be so many chains to bind the hands of those who have conferred on them the supreme power. Nothing less than a general effort will then suffice to break them, and the people might find themselves so entangled, as not to be in a condition of making the attempt.

I do not pretend to intimate by this, that the English have lost any part of that liberty for which their ancestors so bravely fought: my only view is, to make you perceive it is probable they may not always preserve it. A change of manners necessarily draws after it a change of government: the operation of corruption is imperceptible, but the effect is not therefore the less to be dreaded.

The English, who love to compare themselves with the Romans, should consider, that as soon as those haughty conquerors of the

world contracted a thirst after riches, they lost the republican spirit, the only foundation of their power and liberty. Nothing is so opposite to the love of one's country, as private interest; and you cannot but have perceived, that the spirit which animates the different parties here, deserves at least to be suspected. Liberty cannot subsist without true patriotism, nor perhaps, without a kind of fanaticism, which a concurrence of moral and physical causes renders equally difficult to root out of some people, and to inspire others with it. The Romans, whose thoughts were all turn'd to the grandeur of their nation, made it a common duty to sacrifice their own interests to those of the republic. Private advantage, according to them, resulted from the attachment of every one to the common cause. A citizen of Rome thought himself superior to a king. The English are a rational and trading people, who seek only to enrich themselves, and have not that powerful motive which the Romans had, to make them act for the publick good preferably to their own. That desire of glory and heroic ardour, which made the Romans masters of the world, is not to be found in England. The old republicans fell into trade only to secure their conquests; but our neighbours here never take up arms in Europe, with any other view, than to extend their commerce. If the publick interest leads them into a foreign war, the wisest among them will confess

confess it to be more frequently the pretence, than the cause of their domestic divisions.

The following picture of the principal heads of the opposition, was made by one, who is thought to know, as well as any man, the present state of England. “ Unhappily (says this
“ able politician) it is but too true, that the
“ opposition to the minister is founded solely
“ upon avarice *. Those who maintain it
“ are excluded from the advantages which
“ arise from power and places; and in this
“ consists all the mystery of the opposition,
“ what art soever may be employed to disguise it. If the minister could find means
“ to satisfy the ruling passions of those who
“ oppose him, if he could satiate them with
“ employments and pensions, it would be easy
“ for him to govern without trouble, till he
“ had raised the power of his master above
“ that of his own party.”

What an idea is here given us, sir, of all these illustrious persons, who seem so warmly animated with zeal for the publick good! In all probability, it is exaggerated by the warmth of the writer; but it cannot be denied, that a man who has declaimed against the government in the House of Commons, has been known to become its apologist in the House of Peers, when the King has been pleased to give him a seat there. Let us not be surpris-

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* *Multorum crudelitas, & ambitio, & luxuria, ut paria pessimis audeat, fortunæ favore deficitur. Eadem velle eos cognoscas, da posse quantum volunt. SEN.*

zed at all these variations and contradictions : men change both their sentiments and language according to circumstances. Nor should they always, for this reason, be suspected of insincerity : self-love blinds the eyes of the majority, and they really see objects in no other light, than they are interested to behold them. There is in mankind more of folly than of malice : it is not malignity, but vanity that is the principle of all their actions.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXXXVIII.

TO M. DE CREBILLON the Younger.

The company at Bath. Virtue of the waters to the fair sex. Supplement to tea made use of here. The New-market of the women. Intrigues to get down hither.

BATH, &c.

SIR,

I have at last satisfied a great object of my curiosity ; I have seen the waters of Bath. Scarborough, Tunbridge, and Epsom, are no longer in mode, and therefore I have paid them no visit : for if a man would go to the waters

waters without being sick, he should, at least, go where he is sure of the best company.

Bath, in my opinion, deserves the regard of a stranger as much as Oxford and Cambridge, which are commonly the objects of it. In these, which have been made famous by their universities, one may get acquainted with learned men of the first order. In my present residence there is a set of people, who do not know so much Latin and Greek, but they are much more agreeable company to live among: I would be understood of that part of the nation, which in all countries is the most amiable. Bath is the place of all England in which the fair sex at present take the most delight, and consequently, where the greatest endeavours are used to please them. Those who imagine the waters of Bath to be like those of Bourbon, where scarce any body is found but the infirm, the paralytic, or the valetudinarian, are much mistaken: on the contrary, this is the only place in the kingdom where people enjoy the best health, and make the greatest use of what they enjoy.

I can assure you, sir, the waters of this so charming place deserve their reputation. Does a husband complain that his wife has for a long time denied him an heir? The physicians advise him to send her to Bath, and she soon proves the efficacy of the waters. They are, besides, a certain remedy for the vapours in the fair, and, what would surprize any man but you, who wonder at nothing that regards

the sex, the virtue of these waters operates upon them only. I know a great many diseases that it cures in women, when the men can receive no relief in the same disorders; as the melancholy, the jaundice, and even the consumption, if it be not too far gone.

The company at these waters are always in good humour, and it is agreed, that the principal virtue of the bath is derived from the gaiety of those who use them. If a foreigner would learn the language of the country, or get acquainted with the ladies of England, he ought to spend some time here. The women of quality are not easily seen in London; not because the husbands are jealous, but because the wives are reserved and inaccessible; whereas, on the contrary, here they are all ease and sprightliness in their behaviour. They make the most of the liberty of the country, and the familiarity which the waters afford them.

You, sir, who without having assumed the title of spectator in France, sometimes perform the functions of that office in your ingenious works; you who reveal, with so much delicacy, the little ridiculous foibles of that sex, in which every thing, even the faults, assume the form of graces: you, I say, would be very much entertained with all the scenes that pass at Bath, which would lose nothing under the power of your happy imagination.

When a young widow, or a superannuated dowager, would offer incense upon the altars of Hymen, hither she comes to sacrifice to
that

that god : hither the men born to good fortune repair from all parts to establish their reputation. Here, of all places in England, Irishmen are the best received. He who has caused himself to be talk'd of in autumn at Bath, will infallibly be famous at London in the winter : he will excite the curiosity of dutcheffes, and draw to himself the regard of all the court ladies.

The air of this city seems to inspire a taste of pleasure, to which even the hours of solitude are sacrificed. All the new books are read here, and it is no compliment to tell you, that I have not observed any to be so well relished as yours. *Tan-sai* has been, and will be for a long time the delight of Bath ; it is already ranked among those pieces, the reading of which makes a part of the regimen here observed.

In London, a circle of ladies drinking tea is usually but a melancholy company, in which the most sprightly young fellows do not care to be present. There is little said, unless the topic of scandal happens to unloose their tongues. At Bath, on the contrary, the tea-tables are extremely gay ; and indeed, the tea drank here is of a different kind from that used elsewhere in the kingdom of England, and dominion of Wales. Common tea has no effect upon the spirits ; but Bath tea revives and enlivens the most gloomy dispositions. It is made with arrack, lemons, and sugar. Wine itself does not communicate more warmth, nor inspire more gaiety ; for which reason the ladies at Bath

make great use of it. The very same thing which here is called tea, in every other place goes by the name of punch. The women in London, at least those who have any regard to prudence in their conduct, are obliged to refrain from strong liquors openly, and only sip them in secret: here anniseed-water, citron-water, Barbadoes-water, &c. are part of the tea-table-equipage*.

The men, in short, do not amuse themselves more at Newmarket-races than the women indulge to pleasure at the Bath. They are indeed quite another sort of creatures here than in London, and the constrained uniformity of their common life makes the difference the more remarkable. First, as women, they revenge themselves here, by a month of liberty and diversion, for all the gloominess and confinement, which the yoke of custom holds them in during the rest of the year, while they reside in the capital. The manners may be different, but the sex are every where the same: they love to enjoy their rights, and if they are deprived of them by the injustice or caprice of men, by mode, or by prejudice, they employ all the arts in their power to recover them

* Our author, in this letter, indulges a vain of scandal which is not natural to him on other occasions, and endeavours, in a note, to support what he says by referring to Mirabel's contract with Millamant in Congrève's *Way of the World*. If he had known what he insinuates to be true while he was at Bath, what need had he for the authority of a comedy written about 40 years ago, the scene of which too is in London, to justify his malicious insinuation? I doubt the Abbé himself was indulged with none of those favours which he suggests to be so common in this place, or his pen, at least, would have preserved the Lethæan quality of the waters.—Justice to the British ladies obliges me to make this remark, tho' fidelity, as a translator, would not permit me to deviate from the sense of my original.

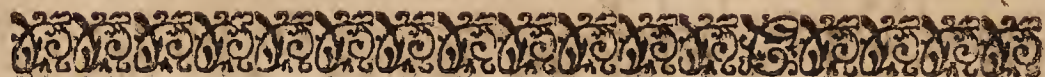
them when occasion offers. Even in those countries where they are treated like slaves, they find means to command their masters. Secondly, the women of this country have a further reason to love to make use of their liberty: I mean, their being born under a government which inspires the spirit of it. Moreover, their melancholy temperature, which often estranges them from pleasure, makes them more sensibly feel it, when they give themselves up to enjoyment. A coquet, who runs gadding without reflexion after every trifling delight, has perhaps, for that reason, the less relish of what she enjoys. But pleasure with an English lady is a capital and rational affair. A party at Bath is, perhaps, the fruit of six months meditation and intrigue: she must feign sickness, gain over the servants, corrupt the physician, importune an aunt, deceive a husband, and in short, have recourse to every artifice in order to succeed; and the business, at last, is to get fully paid for all the pains that have been taken. Pleasure is so much the more attractive to the English women, as it is less familiar, and costs them more to obtain. Melancholy persons feel joy more sensibly than those who are habituated to it.

Last of all, the waters of Bath join the qualities of those of Lethe, to all the other virtues I have mentioned. Let a woman drink ever so little of them, she forgets all that has happened to her in this seat of enchantment. In vain

vain does a young RINALDO in London believe he knows again the amorous ARMIDA whose charms he adored: he finds nothing there but a dragon of virtue, whose very looks cause the most hardy knight to tremble. I have heard say, that the waters of Aix-la-Chapelle have pretty near the same virtues; but I leave the naturalists to examine that fact, and teach us the true cause of it.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.



LETTER LXXXIX;

To M. H * * *.

An evening's conversation with a patriot lord, exposing the ambition of haranguing for reputation.

NORTHAMPTON, &c.

SIR,

A WORD is sufficient to make a wise man understand, and equally sufficient to betray him that is otherwise. This moral reflexion seems like the beginning of an apologue, and perhaps you expect I am going to send you one, in order that you should put it in verse, and embellish it with all the graces,

graces of your imagination. But it is not a fable that I am going to tell you; it is a true fact, which proves, that most of those men, who appear to us so great by help of the artifice they employ to impose on us, become very little, when they suffer us to look upon them in their natural simplicity. Then it is, that in the patriot, zealous for the publick good, we find only an ambitious or turbulent spirit; and that he, who was looked upon as the friend of his country, appears to be nothing but an enemy to the minister.

I supped last night with a member of the Upper house, extremely famous for his love of liberty, or at least, for his opposition to the court: for much care must be taken not to be deceived, one of those being often mistaken for the other. This peer has the reputation of a man of great wit, and is one of those who is in the highest credit. He is a friend of lord B * * *. Mr. POPE has praised him in his works; and, in short, he wants nothing to fix the attention of the publick upon him, or to excite the curiosity of a stranger. I considered him as worthy of all mine, and was very glad of the opportunity of a free conversation with a man of his exalted character.

I a long while endeavoured to pursue some connected subject with this illustrious defender of the liberties of England; but all in vain: sometimes he talk'd to me of the beauty of mr. POPE's verses, and sometimes of mr. OGLETHORPE's voyages: he entertained me also
upon

upon mr. ROLLIN's ancient history, and the history of China by father DU HALDE. I must own I was surprized to find him so conversant with the state of our literature, that he could even pass his judgment upon the merit of certain periodical sheets, that appear weekly at Paris; "and which are satires only to feed the malignity of fools, rather than true pieces of criticism, calculated to enlighten the understanding, and perfect the taste;" which were the very words in which he spoke of them. But, besides that in this he informed me of nothing which I did not know, I wanted him to talk of subjects of greater importance, than a few paultry scribblers. I asked him, if he would not be in London at the opening of next session of parliament? "Yes sir, said he, it is my duty, and that I will perform; but I can no longer take any delight there. How, my lord, answered I, no delight?" "Why so?---Because, answered he, I can no longer be in a passion. I am almost sixty, and all my warmth is gone. I knew the time when I was young, and the blood boiled in my veins: then I could make a noise in the house, and have spoken two hours together without pausing. If my opinion was contradicted, God knows with what energy I supported it. But now the case is alter'd, and I cannot speak loud enough to be heard. The new-comers have eclipsed me, and I shine no longer. I speak my opinion, that's all; and I think it hard

" to

“ to be reduced to that, after having so long
“ played a nobler part. You cannot imagine
“ the pleasure there is in speaking, when a
“ man is transported with the spirit of party,
“ and the heat of dispute; when he is sure
“ that what he says in the house will spoil
“ the minister’s digestion, and disturb the king
“ at his supper. These, sir, are the preroga-
“ tives of us English lords, which your no-
“ blemen are strangers to: but it is a satisfac-
“ tion which I can taste no longer, and which
“ I always regret the loss of. How happy is
“ my lord C * * * ! Though of my age, no
“ affairs of importance come upon the carpet,
“ to which he does not speak the first, the
“ loudest, and the last. He has lost nothing
“ of the fire of his youth; but for my part,
“ I am past the working myself up to a pas-
“ sion.”

He accompanied these last words with a deep sigh; and this is the whole, sir, without the least deviation from truth, that was to me either curious or entertaining, in the conversation of this eminent person. There was not even so much as a word said about the love of our country; and the freedom of speech was looked upon as valuable, rather as a means of mortifying the minister, than as a way for procuring the good of the nation.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.

L E T-



LETTER XC

To the Abbé D'OLIVET.

Revolutions in the empire of letters. ROUSSEAU'S character. Degeneracy of French authors. Age of LEWIS XIV. Dispute concerning the antients and moderns. No publick encouragement to science in England. A scholar, what? Wit. Common-sense. Nonsense. Difficulty of translating. Judgments of several authors, pieces, words, &c.

LONDON, &c.

SIR,

WORKS of genius do as much honour to a nation as its conquests, and the triumphs of literature are not less reputable than those of arms. Posterity places the hero, and he that fung him, in the same rank.

The great men of both sides, produced in the age of LEWIS XIV, have equally excited the jealousy of our neighbours; and the English are the people, of all others, who take the most umbrage at the glory of France. They have equally employed their efforts to dispute with her the pre-eminence in the republick of letters

letters, and oppose the aggrandizement of her power in Europe.

Certain it is, that they have contributed much to the advancement of philosophy: but perhaps they are unjust when they believe, that “ in eloquence, poesy, and even in history, and all other kinds of literature, no people ancient or modern, have surpassed them.” At least, these are pretensions, which they cannot easily justify.

The empire of letters has its revolutions as well as other empires. In these latter times it passed from the Italians to the French, and now the English labour hard to dispossess us. I am sorry we do not do so much to maintain our rank, as our neighbours do to become our masters.

If the glory of the French Parnassus is not entirely eclipsed, it grows dimmer every day. Under another AUGUSTUS we should not find another VIRGIL. While a king, the delight of his people, at the head of his armies, astonishes all Europe with the rapidity of his conquests, our degenerate muses have in vain attempted to celebrate them: all they could do, was, to express the imbecility of their zeal. The princes of this day, who equal the lustre of the greatest names in military affairs, signalize their valour to little purpose; there is no crown for them, but that bestowed by the hands of Victory herself.

ROUSSEAU shewed our poets upon what part of Parnassus to gather those laurels, which
immor-

immortalize equally he who gives, and he who receives them. Whether they had not strength enough to keep on in the road which he had marked out for them, or they had the misfortune to fall into bye-paths, which led them out of their way; they have only been able to pick up here and there a few loose flowers. They have only erected monuments of a day's duration, to facts in themselves immortal.

In works of another kind we are not more happy. I never pay a visit to the French book-sellers of this city, but I am grieved to find them so well stocked with new books, printed at Paris, which dishonour our nation in the sight of foreigners.

We are at this day become great in little, and little in great things; philosophers in trifles, and triflers in philosophy. Instead of studying for the advancement of human knowledge, and the perfection of arts, we think of nothing but how to gratify that taste for superficial things, which prevails in the present age.

It is but too true, sir, that learning is totally neglected among us; and such men as you, who fill the first places in literature, ought to complain of it. The lectures founded by the French restorer of learning * in the royal college, in order to perpetuate the study and taste of the learned languages, are at this day frequented by nothing but Irish priests.

Whatever

* Francis I.

Whatever gifts nature may have bestow'd on us, we are in need of models to form ourselves by : for he who is obliged to draw all from himself, never produces any thing great. CORNEILLE himself did not begin to rise till he wrote the Cid. The works of the antients were familiar to the good writers of LEWIS XIV's age, and it was by imitating the former that the latter became their equals. It was from EURIPIDES that RACINE learned the art of moving the passions.

Different authors, perhaps more for their own interest than for the want of knowing better, have of late years pretended that the progress which the sciences have made among us, may dispense us for the future from going to the schools of Rome and Greece. They perceived they could get no reputation themselves, but in proportion as they could run down that of the antients. It is more easy to decry the merit of those great models than to equal it ; and therefore, not being able to imitate their simplicity, they endeavour'd to make it pass for rusticity.

As this prevention, false as it is, was favourable to two vices that are natural to men, vanity and indolence, these new doctors soon made a number of proselytes. Those that were called the wits, that is to say, ignorant and superficial writers, thought it their duty to propagate principles that were so much to their taste. In a word, all the present generation seem to have adopted them; and you

see the sorrowful effects. In sciences, as in morality, the least relaxation has dangerous consequences, and perhaps as much pains is requisite to keep them in perfection, as to bring them to it at the first.

Our age, in the different productions of wit, is already so much inferior to that which preceded it, that the complaints on that account are general. But the better ground I see there is for them, the more ridiculous does it appear to ascribe them, as some people do, to the small protection that is now given in France to literature. I am not afraid to advance, on the contrary, that the sciences still receive more encouragement from the government in France than in any other country. In England, private persons care for and favour those who cultivate them: but the public ministry, whose influence is always the most powerful, contributes but very weakly to their advancement.

The writers I have mentioned endeavour to impose upon us equally in what regards our neighbours, and what passes among ourselves. However, those who have recourse to such artifices abuse themselves, while they think to abuse the public: these frivolous excuses are perceived to be only the effect of their insincerity, which hinders them from confessing their own ignorance and insufficiency.

M. DE LA MOTTE dared to give his judgment upon HOMER, whose language he
I
owned

owned he did not understand. Without condemning him, we may with assurance say, that those who follow his example have not the same advantages as he to excuse them from this part of knowledge, which they despise for no other reason but because they have it not.

BAYLE, perhaps with too much severity, pretends that whoever does not understand Greek cannot call himself a learned man. At present, among those who assume that name, how many are there who scarcely understand Latin! A romance, the most contemptible pamphlet, are by the authors of them thought sufficient titles to this appellation.

Of all our numerous living writers, one part suffer themselves to be carried away by the torrent, and the others give themselves up to their indolence. Hence we now see nothing appear in France but frivolous works, because such works are most in fashion, and the most easy to succeed in. The solid of late is entirely neglected in all that is done among us, and the agreeable is the only thing pursued. As in the present age we build only for ourselves, and not for our descendants: so in works of wit we write only for our own age, without the least thought of posterity. A man that is born with talents to have made him useful in society, now contentedly wastes his life in writing wretched romances.

Those who indulge to such an ill use of the gifts bestowed upon them by nature, do

not perceive the injury they do themselves. They obtain indeed a momentary reputation, but cannot rise to be of any real value *. Writers whose works are marked with the seal of public utility, are the only ones that have any claim to true estimation.

The reputation of being a *wit*, of which men are so jealous, tho' it be acquired at small expence, is the sole cause of these errors: as the women only give this reputation, the men write only for the women. It is not surprising that so many people put such a high value upon all those superficial writings: they are the only works adapted to their capacity. Those frivolous minds, which are not affected with the good sense of the anti-ents, despise what they do not possess. This is a part that self-love always readily takes, to avoid being mortified for the want of what nature has refused us.

It is thought doing a favour to the writers of antiquity, to allow they had a *gross common sense*; for that is the only merit which the partizans of modern literature do not dispute with them. But few of these criticks perceive what they grant in this concession. It is the common language of those who are destitute of judgment, to say that every man has his share of it. They are not afraid to advance that DESPREAUX was no man of wit; and the famous ROUSSEAU, according to

* *Vera gloria radices agit, atque etiam propagatur: ficta omnia celeriter tanquam flosculi decidunt, nec simulatum potest quidquam esse diuturnum.*

to them, belonged to the last age, and had but little of it. The matter now-a-days passes for nothing, and the workmanship only is regarded: the fine thoughts, as they are called, are every thing. In a great many works the author does nothing but follow a pleasant idea, and dress it up in the familiar words which he has collected in the company he keeps; so that what he ascribes at last to his imagination, is nothing but the dictates of his memory.

There is one simple way of coming to a decision, which would not, perhaps, be very favourable to the partizans of the taste that now reigns. Translations are the touchstones of wit, and that which is true wit in one language will be equally so in another. It is like mercury, which tho' it may assume different forms, is not lost in any operation you can make it undergo. What the Italians call *concetti*, (conceits) if translated into English would be called *non-sense*.

The works of the antients have always undergone this proof, without losing any thing of their intrinsic value. HOMER, read him in what language you will, is always the greatest of poets. Even DON QUIXOTE did not succeed less in French than in Spanish. MOLIERE preserves his true beauties in Italian and English: as he painted nature, the truth and justice of his pictures will be always acknowledged, if they are but render'd properly and happily. Every translation is a

copy: but to copy well, a man should know how to paint.

When those of our gay modern pieces, which have the most reputation in France, come to be translated into English, they appear to be only tissues of nothings, agreeably express'd. All those so delicate thoughts vanish away when you take them out of the words in which they are dress'd. The kind of wit, in which their merit consists, evaporates as soon as they touch the crucible. As all the lustre was owing only to the turn and polish, it cannot be preserved in another tongue, because it is impossible to find equivalent expressions for all those pretty phrases that supply the place of thoughts.

By this proof we may, in fact, know the merit of every author: for true wit is the same in all nations and ages. We now read PHÆDRUS with pleasure, and LA FONTAINE'S fables would have succeeded at Athens. Posterity, which two thousand years hence shall know nothing of CORNEILLE but his works translated into a language then spoken, will not be able to divine what nation he was of, nor in what age he lived. RACINE, admirable as he otherwise is, discovers himself to be a Frenchman. Others, independent of their national character, have also the character of their age; and others, again, have only the wit of the very year they wrote in. Such is the wit of many of our modern authors. We may go farther, and say that the wit
which

which lately has been so much in vogue, is properly, but of a single day, and can produce nothing of more than a day's duration.

Whatever depends purely upon the mode, must feel the inconstancy of it: hence many books, that made a great noise at their first appearance, soon fall into contempt, or at least, into oblivion. As their principal merit arises from a jargon different from the common language, and a conformity to that vein of pleasantry which is then in vogue, they are carried away with the vortex of ridicule and extravagancies, their cotemporaries, which are obliged to give room to others more powerful by their novelty. The revolutions of follies, in our nation are equally sudden and frequent; so that, the wit of this year will not be the wit of the next. When, hereafter, in some of our romances, which paint neither the language nor the manners of our time, it shall be read, "that a woman who has an *affair*,
"ought not to be blamed, because there are
"no women who have them not;" in all likelihood they will not understand what the author intended to say, which will be so much the worse for the honour of our age.

It is true, that among these productions, which are esteemed ingenious, some do, in fact, so much resemble works of wit, that people are in some measure excusable for being a while deceived by them. In this age, wherein philosophy has made more progress than genius, we have learned to counterfeit wit as

perfectly as diamonds: we imitate equally the lustre of both. Solidity is the sole quality which we cannot give to those essays, in which we aim at making art pass for nature. We may multiply them, however, to infinity, without being ever the richer: for it is through real indigence that so many authors affect this modish mimic wit. There are certain receipts how to make it, and the secret has lately got into print. “It is * nothing more than to unite
 “distant things, or divide those that seem to
 “join, or oppose one thing to another:” Above all, it is running much into antitheses, which, of all the figures of rhetoric is the most brilliant, and may be used with the least trouble. To say things otherwise than they have been said before, to give a new turn to thoughts that are trivial and trite, to express common ideas in a singular manner, ridiculously to bring in common-place learning, and always to affect as much order in the words, as there is disorder in the thoughts: to do all this, “is
 “to be witty in a superior degree.” A judicious writer has made this remark: “We now
 “see nothing in the republick of letters, but
 “works made up of separate pieces, that were
 “never intended to go together.” †

In the present stile, which is always close, that is, incoherent, neither number nor measure can be perceived. 'Tis all uneven, and becomes harsh by endeavouring to make it laconic. A sententious air is given to the most common

* *Dissertation sur l'esprit.*

† *Essai sur le beau.*

common reflexions. Those artful connexions and transitions, which suppose as much order in the ideas, as there is address in the manner of preparing them, are now unknown. This is a part of composition which neither wit nor rules can bestow, and which is the effect only of taste and judgment.

It must be owned, however, that we have still many authors, who keep to a more connected and natural manner of writing. Among the pieces of mere entertainment, the *Siege of Calais* is one of those in which this merit is most remarkable. — What thanks are not due to the author, who had the wisdom to prefer to that brilliancy of stile which is so much in fashion, the elegance and simplicity of the writers of the age of LEWIS XIV.

Mr. LOCKE makes wit consist in a happy assemblage of ideas, which have some resemblance or relation to each other. From thence, in fact, results that fine simplicity, and that natural manner of writing, which we admire in the ancients, and which nobody deviates from, but those who have not sufficient strength of genius to make a thought shine by its own beauties. The Greek and Roman authors, sometimes excited our admiration by the art with which they bring together the most remote ideas: the writers of our days endeavour only to astonish by the union of ideas that are contradictory. In writings of every kind, as well as in every species of design, the delight now is to marry things of opposite nature. I know

not

not whether this vitiated taste passed from France into England, or from England into France: but Mr. POPE himself is not exempt from it, when, in his description of Hampton-Court, he expresses himself thus to the Queen:

Here thou, great ANNA, whom three realms
obey,

Dost sometimes counsel take, ---and sometimes
tea. *

If his aim was to surprize, he has hit the mark: if to be humorous, I doubt he has not succeeded.

After the example of those modern ladies, who by mixing Strafs † with their diamonds are the more adorned, though not the more richly dressed; even those of our authors who are best acquainted with the little value of this counterfeit wit, do not yet abstain from the use of it in their works, the more to dazzle their common readers. This is all that has been got by the ambition of finery. No pains are taken to acquire the true riches of genius; because they are sure of making a shew with the false. We are content to make use of diamonds of our own manufacture; and by that means, mager all the pompous glitter of our writings, we shall leave nothing to our posterity,

* *Rape of the Lock*, Canto III.

† The stones that imitate diamonds are so called from the name of the ingenious workman who excelled most in this imitation.

rity, which will set no value upon effects in which it finds no solidity.

The works of the ancients are mines, in which our fathers enriched themselves, but which we have unhappily abandoned. Whatever treasures they have discovered in them, they have not exhausted them; or, to speak more properly, other mines might be deduced from the old funds, if we did but apply ourselves to make the most of them. The thoughts of HORACE and JUVENAL did not appear in French to be borrowed beauties, when, like MALHERBE and DESPREAUX, an author has the art to make them his own by his labour. Those who will study the authors of antiquity, may find in them new buds of ideas, which they may be the first to comprehend, tho', perhaps, they would otherwise never have found them in themselves; ideas that cannot be perceived but by those who inure themselves to a solid habit of thinking. Reading of good books is the true culture of the mind; it warms the imagination, and renders it prolific. Mr. LOCKE's *essay on human understanding*, is only the unfolding of one of those buds *, of which the Schoolmen who for two thousand years had taught ARISTOTLE's philosophy, had perceived neither the principle or the consequences.

Our young people, in familiarizing to themselves more the good sense of the antients, would

* *Nihil est in intellectu humano, quod non prius fuerit in sensu.*

would contract the habit of preferring that true spirit, which touches them so little, and which lies so deep, to the fine wit which they now set so much value on, and which is founded only on whimsey. The latter has indeed its merit, but of a secondary sort only; because arising from its agreement with the other, whose merit is in its own nature not less real than invariable. They will perceive, that as truth ought always to reign in this; so that is worth nothing, if it be destitute of veri-similitude. The most extravagant productions ought, at least, to have a train of order and concord; and in the wildest flights there should be a sort of harmony, which brings them somewhat near to truth.

Pleasantry, or humour, is one of those objects to which wit applies itself the most, and in which it shews itself the best, whenever it touches humanity in general, that is, the vices, faults, and absurdities, of the human-kind. Wit thus employed, is sure to please at all times, and to be relished by all men: it is a kind of universal spirit. The *Miser* of PLAUTUS still causes a laugh upon our stage, and posterity will judge in the same manner of MOLIÈRE'S *Misanthrope*. But when humour is levelled only at the customs of particular societies, and the manners of private persons; when whole volumes are written upon trifles, of which the ridicule may be exposed by a single stroke, the wit becomes frivolous, through the objects

upon

upon which it is employed. Such is the wit of the present age.

In every character that MOLIERE has drawn, every man is known who is subject to the faults he describes. Instead of these general paintings, scarce any thing is now given us, but particular portraits. As much combination of ideas, perhaps, is necessary to paint a *Caillette* as a *Misanthrope*; but the character of one being a defect in humanity, and the other being only the foible of a particular society, all the wit employed to represent a *Caillette*, in the judgment of reasonable people, is so much wit thrown away. How extensive soever be the genius that a man has received from nature, it can be judged of only by the use that he makes of it.

In conversation, whoever continually sacrifices the solid to the agreeable, has but a trifling mind: as he who does nothing but point epigrams, is often but a bad man. These distinctions are not always made in the world; perhaps, because it is the interest of every one, not to be too nice upon the subject. Vivacity is commonly taken for imagination, and jargon for wit. The nature of true wit consists in an easy conception of ideas, and a happy manner of delivering them. In writing, as in conversation, he who affects to have it always, rather astonishes than pleases, and when his work has been once read, it grows tiresome at the second reading. A man who speaks so differently from others, is certainly attended

to : but he is more frequently the center of a circle, than an object of esteem with those who compose it.

Much more success attends us in either way, when we rather endeavour to communicate wit to others, than to shew our own. I mean, when we speak and write so, that he who hears or reads, prevents our thoughts, and believes he remembers what he is then taught. There are some men of whom nothing can be learned, but who may have room given them to think ; and to do this is always to do them a service which they ever acknowledge. They take pleasure in pursuing a generation of ideas, of which you offer them only the bud : they are debtors to you for the discoveries which you enable them to make ; and the happy proof that they make them by their own strength, turns to the advantage of him who put them in their way. They cannot gratulate themselves for thinking like you, without being pleased at the same time that you think like them. The content they receive, is the motive of their approbation, and the measure both of their esteem, and your real merit. In fact, truth and reason are common to every man, and not more the property of him who first speaks them, than of him who speaks them a thousand years after ; not more an author's than an intelligent reader's to whom he communicates them. “ It is not PLATO's sentiment more than mine, says MONTAGNE, “ because he and I understand in the same
“ manner.”

“manner.” A truth is not according to an author who composes a work, more than according to the reader who judges of it, because they both agree in opinion.

But if truth belongs to all the world, the manner of delivering it is peculiar to every man; and this is what makes the distinguishing character, and constitutes the different wit of every author. One to persuade us employs the force of reasoning; another makes use of the charms of imagery, and a third pathetically expresses the sentiment. The BOURDALOUES, the BOSSUETS, the MASSILLONS, all by different ways arrive at the same end. Most of those who are at this time regarded as their successors, have no character that is peculiar to them; they follow the bad taste of the age, and endeavour more to amuse their auditors than to make them better. Instead of clanging the thunders of eloquence against vice, they throw out their little epigrammatic darts against what is ridiculous. Often, without any regard for their sacred function, for the place in which they speak, and for the subjects they are treating of, they retail their morality in madrigals, which never appear so ingenious at the opera-house, as they are indecent in the pulpit, notwithstanding they win them the votes of the women, who come in crowds to hear them preach. More intent always upon words than things, upon themselves than upon their subjects, they cause it to be

be said of them, that if they do not convince, there is at least some pleasure in hearing them ; and of their auditors, that they prize wit too much, and good sense too little.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
your most humble, &c.



L E T T E R X C I.

To the President DE MONTESQUIEU ;

Different manners of applying learning. English liberty pretended. Author's idea of true liberty. Wherein consists the welfare of a state. People better under a large monarchy than a petty state. Tyranny of the East. No danger of such in Europe.

LONDON, &c.

S I R,

THOSE who look for nothing in the sciences but amusement, seldom find any thing to enlighten their reason ; they become more learned without growing more useful to the community. They do not perceive the philosopher in the poet, nor the politician in the historian : they cannot, in the annals of a nation, discern the agreement between it's government and it's manners, which is the most serviceable part of our instruction.

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The men of deep reflexion do not charge their memory with facts; till after they have examined their order and connexion: they compare their own age with those that preceeded it: they observe how different laws make men differ from one another, though nature has produced all mankind nearly alike in all ages and nations. Sometimes also they see different principles produce the same effects. Honour; that is to say, self-love, when well directed, will make some men do the same things that others are excited to by the love of their country.

This, sir, is the fruit, which men, who resemble you, gather from the sciences; these are the advantages they procure to the state, in which they diffuse the riches of their knowledge. When they read over history, or with a philosophical eye survey the different governments at this time established in Europe, they attend less to the names that are given them, than to their real effect, to the influence they have upon the general good of society. They see a republick governed by tyranny, and monarchies in which equity reigns.

I know not whether the English do not pay too dear for that pretended liberty of which they are so jealous: that degree of subjection, with which they reproach us, is not the thing they please themselves in believing it, and would perhaps render them less unhappy than the continual factions which tear them

to pieces. BAYLE, one of those authors, who discover in their writings the most sincere love of truth, confessed, while he lived in a country that passes for the most free of all others, that many people in foreign countries form to themselves wrong ideas of the Dutch liberty, and the French servitude. “Essential and
 “effectual subjection, says MONTAGNE, reaches
 “only those among us, who consent to it,
 “and chuse to get honours and riches, by
 “submitting to servitude: for he that will
 “keep by his own fire-side, and knows how
 “to conduct his family without quarrels or
 “law-suits, is as free as the duke of Venice.”

The refugees might be justly reproached for that satirical spirit, which they have contracted among our neighbours, if the misfortune that sours their temper did not make them in some measure excusable; but the English have no excuse for judging of us only by what they have found in some vain declamations. Those among them, who are transported with a republican enthusiasm, may paint monarchy in colours as black as they please; there are people who would not know it by the frightful pictures they make, and whose whole happiness and power consists in this kind of government.

What is understood by liberty in any nation? Is it independance of all authority? Is it a right of chusing their masters, and having a part in the government? It would be easy to shew, that in this sense, liberty is the
 cause

cause of infelicity, and often the ruin of those who so possess it. Are the Polanders and Swedes more happy than the French, because they elect their kings, and participate in affairs of state? True liberty consists in civil order, in the harmony of society, in the subordination of the different states that compose it. From this perfect accord of the members with their head results the general happiness. Whether private persons obey a monarch, or are governed by a senate, they may be equally free. In order to form a judgment of liberty, it is more necessary to examine the effects, than the form of a government. The people that are happy, may be pronounced a free people.

The most sure way to judge of the happiness of a nation, is to see, whether the country they inhabit be well peopled: for the true riches of a state consists in the quantity of its members. There is no reason to fear, that the land will not produce wherewithal to nourish them, since the earth is no where barren if the men are laborious. When necessity awakens industry, they drain marshes, and level mountains.

France, though well peopled, might be three times more populous than it is, without being obliged to get from foreigners the necessaries of life, to purchase from abroad those commodities, which are of the first importance in commerce. Consequently, it might be three times richer, three times more powerful than at present.

The more men there are in a state, the more hands are there to cultivate the lands, to carry on manufactures, to repulse an enemy, &c. Every man, in whatsoever way of life he be, may get by his labour more than he wants for mere subsistence; and what himself does not consume, is so much gained to the society. Thus, the more men there are in a country, the more there will be of these exceedings from the labour of individuals, which all turn to the advantage of a state. It is this overplus carried to foreigners, that makes the riches of all trading nations.

Certain it is, that according to the nature of their government, the men that are more or less laborious, enjoy more or less the fruits of their labour. However, instead of listening to prejudices which flatter human pride, but not being agreeable to the weakness of our nature, are perhaps contrary to our true interests; let us consult only reason to come at the truth, and examine, by her laws, what makes the happiness of a people, and of consequence their liberty.

It appears to me, sir, that in every state, republican or monarchical, the general welfare of the society results from the welfare of every individual. A reasonable man is always happy, if he has what is necessary for him according to his condition, that is to say, if he has the protection of the laws, and can live as his father lived before him: so that one of the essential things to the good of a nation, is the
being

being governed in one constant and uniform manner. If for the general advantage, it be found necessary to make some changes in the political constitution, the preparations for them ought to be long about, that they may be brought on in a manner almost insensible. Every too sudden alteration in a government is always dangerous, and has commonly no other effect, than to introduce new abuses. Hence we may conclude, that nothing is more contrary to the happiness and liberty of a people, than licentiousness, and a spirit of dissention, which has no other tendency, but to overthrow the established authority, or which, at least, continually representing such revolutions as possible, destroys that publick confidence which is the most firm support of authority.

What, in effect, would be the fate of a king and a people, whose rights and pretensions had no certain rule, who, instead of labouring in union to promote the grandeur of the state, thought of nothing, reciprocally, but the prince of violating the privileges of his subjects, and the people of usurping the prerogatives of their sovereign? Must not these intestine and contrary motions totally destroy the strength of a nation, which is powerful only in proportion as it is united? The body politick grows feeble through the violence of these agitations, which can end only in frequent revolutions, if, in the mean time, there be a neighbouring people, attentive to subjugate this unhappy nation, who will neither submit

^to be governed only by one king, nor are able
^to govern themselves.

The English, who write against monarchy, are continually declaiming upon the reigns of the NEROS, and the CALIGULAS; as if those monsters had something in common with the reigns of those sovereigns whom they endeavour to render odious. *

I will add, that by examining things philosophically, we shall find, perhaps, that one sovereign, who, like NERO, should be master of Europe, Asia, and Africa, and would imitate him in the most cruel abuses of his authority, could not render the people in general so unhappy, as they commonly are in a petty state. A power that extends so far, is by that means the less heavy upon particulars, and must be as favourable to the common people, as it may be fatal to some great men. It is in great cities, and under great empires, that those who do not trouble themselves about affairs of state, enjoy the advantages of their condition with the greatest security, and possess that sort of liberty, which makes the happiness of a reasonable man. It might be easily proved to any man, who has read history with attention, that the people in general were more happy under NERO, than they are now in the republic of Holland.

But, I will not be afraid to say it, despotism is not so much to be feared, in such an enlightened age as ours, as it may have been in those

* See Gordon's *reflexions upon Tacitus*:

those times, when the darkness of ignorance covered the face of the universe. The more men are enlightened, the fewer faults do they commit against good order. Vice is moral falsehood, as virtue is moral truth; and as people can more or less distinguish the one from the other, they will be always more or less virtuous.

The habit of reasoning has an influence upon all things; it enables us the better to judge both of political government and civil life, of what we owe to others, and what others owe to us. Reason teaches kings, as well as people, to know their true interest: it teaches subjects to live in that obedience which order requires of them, and sovereigns not to make a bad use of their power.

Fanaticism of any kind cannot subsist along with reason; and if reason does not quite destroy it, in those who are born in different parties, at least, it brings men to think more favourably of each other. Ever the friend of humanity, she employs no other arms to subdue with, but those of persuasion and sweetness. She hinders those of the strongest party from making a bad use of their power, and teaches moderation to those of the weaker side. She, by experience, convinces those men, who are most ready to perceive the defects of a government, that it is sometimes better to bear them, than ruin all, under pretence of reforming. What was it produced the last civil wars in England? Those seditious persons, who

broke the sceptre of CHARLES I, armed with a rod of iron a man, who, under the name of Protector, became the tyrant of his country. The weakness of his successor, and the wisdom of the great men in the nation, soon induced the English to resume their antient constitution.

It is not surprising, that a rude uncultivated people, who have no sense of the connexion between their interests and their duties, who know neither the principles of morality, nor the foundation of policy, who have no idea, either of sciences or arts, either of exact equity, or true heroism; having never had before their eyes any model of justice, or example of virtue: it is not, I say, surprising, that such nations should suffer themselves continually to be hurried away by fanaticism, and should be either oppressed by cruel tyranny, or destroyed by unbridled licentiousness. But how is it possible, that prince and people, accustomed to converse with the virtues of the Greeks and Romans, and to whom history, the lesson of kings and subjects, is familiar, should deceive themselves, the prince in the administration of his authority, and the subjects in the rules of their obedience?

How much more then ought we to esteem the advantage of a religion, all the morality of which tends only to the maintenance of order, and the welfare of the human kind; of a religion that teaches us to respect in kings the images of the divinity, and obliges them to
treat

treat their subjects as their brethren; which continually reminds the people, that obedience is their duty, and their submission a virtue; and which teaches kings that their power is not arbitrary, and that their justice shall be judged!

If, in the east, mahommedism and tyranny still hold numerous nations under the yoke, it is ignorance only that is to be accused, both for the shameful irregularities of the sovereigns, and the blind submission of the people. The like excesses can never have place among christian monarchs. If any one of these, after the example of a mussulman prince, shall dare, without form of justice, to devote one of his subjects to death, this redoubtable sovereign would have but a tottering authority, because it would be arbitrary, upon his throne surrounded with crimes. Princes that can do what they please with their people, depend themselves upon their soldiers, and those whom they employ to keep their subjects in servitude, can bring servitude upon themselves. In sporting with the lives of men, they expose their own, and the same steel which for their humour cut short the days of a wretch, threatens their own head. Besides, in those countries where the abuses of power are so cruel, and revolutions so common, the shadows of ignorance still hangs over every thing, even over the religion there professed.

Slavery is not to be dreaded in christian Europe, while it is divided, as at present, under several potentates. The French, who have
always

always distinguished themselves from other nations, by their love to their kings, are here out of the question. This constant love speaks the praise both of them and their sovereigns, because it never can be customary to love tyrants. But, supposing a king of England, having made himself absolute, should intend to abuse his power, the cries of an oppressed people would soon call in their neighbours to their succour. The discontented nation would pass under other laws. When the people of the Low-countries attempted to withdraw themselves from the Spanish dominions, all the other powers of Europe stretch'd out their arms to their assistance.

The English will answer, that it is not the Turkish bow-string they are afraid of, but the authority of a king, powerful enough to establish taxes without the consent of the nation. Well, but is it not the king's pleasure now, not the will of the people, that governs all affairs in parliament? Is not the minister entire master in the house? If he that governs is obliged to give way to the faction that opposes him, will not he who succeeds him, dispose of all again with the same facility? Do not they complain, that they are overwhelm'd with national debts, and that taxes, contrary to the interests of the people, are continually imposed upon them? Though the sovereign authority be different here from what it is in other places, does it not produce the same effect? If the parliament is sometimes the council

council of the nation, it is more commonly nothing but a court, which the king disposes of, and which gives the form and force of laws to his good pleasure.

Through the troubles that are kept up incessantly by the factions in England, the people buy dear the small part they have in the government. If they cannot preserve their liberties but at this price, their lot, perhaps, is less to be envied, than their zeal for liberty deserves to be praised. It is very far from being true, that every where else, as these people persuade themselves, the slavery of the subject is a necessary consequence of the sovereign's independent authority. It appears even, that in general, the eastern despotism is not to be fear'd, in countries where the people are naturally haughty, turbulent, and courageous. The men of our climates are not made for slavery like the Asiatics, whom sloth has bastardized. Our courage is not enervated in the same manner. Politicks, in short, are not yet understood, since the same vice has not every where the same effects. Necessity rouses up some people, and makes them industrious: others it discourages, and hinders from labouring. Nature and morality have such an influence upon one another, that according to different ages and climates, the same government renders people happy or miserable.

Let us with gratitude rejoice, at the advantage of being born in a country, where men are capable of thinking, and in an

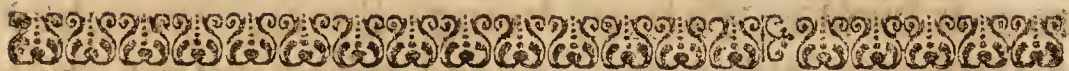
age wherein the lights of philosophy direct all to the welfare of the society ; that being subjects without being slaves, we obey sovereigns, who are indeed independent, but whose true interest is inseparable from ours.

Let us return thanks to heaven, which at this day causes us to live under a prince who is wholly employed for the good of his subjects. If he is become the object of their love, it is, because he hath shewn himself their father. What prince was ever more worthy to command a nation, to whom it is habitual to love their kings ! The voice of the people says, none ; and the people do not flatter. The name of LEWIS *the well-beloved*, is already written in the annals of history, as well as in the hearts of his subjects.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble, &c.

L E T.



L E T T E R XCII.

To Monsieur DE BUFFONS;

Quære, If the author is changed, or his countrymen. Reflexions upon the petits maitres, petites maitresses, foppish lawyers, women who affect learning, &c. More scandalous customs. New words in use, and the abuse of them. The point of merit between the French and English left undecided.

PARIS, &c.

S I R,

I AM at last come back to my country, and was very sorry, upon my arrival at Paris, not to find you there. I must own I was surprized at the impression which the French made upon me at my return. Are they changed during my absence, or is it I myself that am changed? I appear here like a stranger, in my own country; and on my side, every thing here seems to me strange. Is it my fault, or the fault of my countrymen?

Perhaps, after all, we do in fact value ourselves too much, upon those airs and manners, which foreigners find so difficult to contract among us, and which we lose so easily among them;

them; those airs, in a word, which are a part of our French politeness. Most of them appear to me now as so many extravagancies, which disgust me as much as the manners of the English did not long since. However, I am forced to acknowledge, that not in France only they stand in the stead of merit, and are that sort of merit which succeeds best in the world.

Not that I find no reasonable men among ourselves: I think so well of humanity and my own nation, as not to be surprized when I see them. But, how advantageously soever I may think of both, it must be owned, that people of sense are very rare in all countries, and perhaps, ours is not the country in which they are most common. The women have too much influence upon our manners, and to the shame of that sex, which we call weak, and of our own, which we believe to be strong, it is but too true, that we owe to them three quarters of our ridiculousness. We have even so bad an opinion of their taste, that in proposing to conform to it, we absurdly take those very means, with a view to please them, which hinder us from succeeding.

The women do not love the *petits maitres*; and yet it is in order to be beloved by them, that those gentlemen are so affected in their airs and dress, and so trifling in all their conduct. The state they put themselves in, and their effeminate manners, make me doubt of what sex they are: even the women do not
regard

regard them as men ; and for our parts, we disclaim them, and at most, look on them only as individuals of a middle species, between men and women. But what surprizes me is, that being thus equally despised by both sexes, they are still incorrigible.

You know that airs change as well as modes ; and the present manners appear to me more extravagant than any that were ever before thought of. One is commonly the most struck with those absurdities, of which we did not see the rise ; and how strange do those now in vogue appear to me ! For example, let a man be ever so much French, can he forbear agreeing, that of all known beings, the least resembling to a thinking and reasonable being is the *petit maitre* of the long-robe ? It is only among us that such an absurdity is found, in a profession so opposite to foppery. The military man, who is not obliged to the same gravity, seems to me excusable for his affected airs. We ought not to look so critically into the conduct of gentlemen, who, being set apart for the defence of their country, have their leisure upon their hands, in time of peace. The plume of feathers is a pass-port for all, and sometimes a grace to that which in another would be ridiculous : for it must be allowed, that the same ridiculous action is most shocking, when committed by a person from whom we ought the least to expect it.

Who can avoid looking without indignation on the indecency of a set of youths, who are as
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far from being serious in their conduct, as they should be so by their profession? At the comedy, at the opera, in all publick places, we see petit maitre senators, whose whole occupation is, to judge of the women's dress, and who often scandalize by the licentiousness of their discourse, those whom they had astonished by the singularity of their figures. How many of our young magistrates seem to place all their merit in the curl of their perukes? And some there are, who render themselves justice in so doing.* But what results at last from all their pains? That they degrade themselves to no purpose. They do not, 'tis true, appear to be what they are; but all their efforts to appear what they are not, are in vain. Let them ever so much affect the cavalier air, there is something of the constrain'd and forc'd in their behaviour which they cannot quit. Even in the country, where they blush at wearing the habit of their profession, the pedantic air will be seen, in spite of the gold lace that disguises it.

How foolish is it for men to aim at appearing any thing else than what they are! To be ashamed of a dress, which of itself inspires only respect, and assume airs which can excite only our contempt! In my opinion, this

* *Quis est istorum qui non malit rempublicam suam turbari quam comam, qui non sollicitior sit de capitis sui decore quam de salute reipublicæ, qui non comptior esse malit quam honestior.* SENECA de brevitate vitæ.

this is the height of extravagance ; and indeed, people of sense look upon the modern petit maitres of the robe as the shame of our nation. But let them dishonour themselves ever so much by their indecencies, I will avoid entering into such particulars, as might reflect upon so respectable a profession, which themselves are the only people who do not honour.

I cannot, however, forbear remarking, that in this country they often carry their licentiousness yet farther. Many reckon among the privileges of their offices, the liberty of doing what they would punish in others. In a city which I will not name, a set of young magistrates took upon them to revive one of the principal ceremonies of the Lupercalia ; only they chose the night to celebrate it in. They then rang'd over all parts of the town, armed in the same manner as the priests used to be at those pagan festivals, and unhappy was he who fell into the hands of our boy-senators. When a stop was put to these disorders, they were not punished. The most guilty, when judg'd by his peers, is sometimes declared innocent. It has been so in all ages : every one is for the honour of his own society, and in order to save it will neglect the publick vengeance.

I cannot conceal from you farther, that I was extremely shock'd at my return by the ridiculous manners of some of our women : I am so much the less ashamed to speak to

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you of it, as their folly only heightens the merit of those who are wise enough to abstain from it. I was the most astonished at that set of them which are known only at Paris, and of whom elsewhere the people have no idea: I mean those of a character so hard to define, that there has been a necessity to invent for them the name of *petit maitresses*. These women, mincing in their language, light in their conduct, affected in all their manners, under pretence of shaking off the yoke of prejudices, put themselves above the weaknesses of their own sex, in order only to debase themselves by the vices of ours. Modesty is not only the chief virtue, but the chief grace of a woman; but these French women are not sufficiently convinced of this great truth. The policy which at this day reigns in the world permits of all things. Such conversation in women, as we now look upon to be only gaiety, would have been by our fathers called impudence.

I took upon me, some days ago, to boast before a lady of this character, of the prudent reserve of the English women. Truly sir, said she, I am surprized that you should talk in such a manner: your English women are only *Species*; they have not common sense, and you have lost yours by living amongst them. Women of spirit, and who know the world, can tell how to conduct themselves, and do not take that for virtue, which is only the mask of it. Prejudices are not received among polite people, and the modesty you
speak

speak of, is only for prudes and citizens wives; and, since you will have it so, for English ladies. The circle was of her opinion, and approved of her reasoning as delicious. By this means our women, who set themselves up for well-educated, contribute to corrupt equally our manners and our language.

How many things might I say to you concerning our modern learned women? Do you not think them entirely like those of *MO-LIERE*? The only difference that I find is, that instead of talking of vortices, they now discourse upon attraction, with which they are no better acquainted. How many ladies have we, who upon the credit of going through a course of physical Experiments, with the abbé *NOLLET*, are continually reasoning upon the figure of the earth, or the rings of Saturn, and believe themselves very deep in the most hidden mysteries of nature; who, in a word, will at any price needs be geometricians. The English women, more rational, instead of giving themselves up to vain curiosities, adorn their minds only with those parts of knowledge that are proper to form the manners. Being convinced that virtues are more worth than talents, they seek to distinguish themselves only by those qualities which are proper to their sex, and their circumstances. Tho' accustomed to think, tho' in a nation where geometry is in such high esteem, they never trouble their heads about it; but

do much better by employing their time in their proper duties.

It is at present the madness of French women to think themselves made for abstract sciences: they have applied to calculations, the taste they had some time ago for romances. NEWTON has taken place on their toilets, instead of the grand Cyrus. A fashionable woman can make no noise in the world, unless she has a geometrician in her train; and the geometrician, who does not throw himself into the world, makes but an awkward figure among his brethren. What will be the consequence of this? That the women will lose, in a fruitless pursuit, the exercise of those graces which are natural to them; and that our learned men, without perceiving it, will contract ridiculous habits in their company.

The wise MONTAGNE says, ‘When I see the women engag’d in rhetorick, law, logick, and such vaintrumpetry, to them entirely useless, I begin to be afraid that the men, who advise them to it, do it only that they may have a right of dogmatizing over them by that means; for what other excuse can I find for them?’

In fact, the sciences are a nourishment which does not agree with all minds; while to some they give strength, they augment the weakness of others. Those nutriments which have the most substance, are the most contrary to weak stomachs. A taste for sciences, in most women, does not come till they have lost every other relish, and as it is not natural to them,

them, it usually does them more harm than good. Very few of them are made amiable by it; but many have their brains turned, and are exposed by it to the laughter of reasonable persons of both sexes. A woman, who thro' misfortune falls into this absurdity, makes herself insupportable by that air of sufficiency, which she assumes, on all occasions, without perceiving it. She seems always in astonishment at what she knows, tho' her pretended knowledge is commonly what others find less astonishing than herself.

If there are some houses at Paris, where women of superior genius delight to assemble together persons of learning, and where, by a happy concurrence of knowledge and politeness, the taste is made perfect while the reason is enlightened, how few, sir, are those houses, in comparison of the many offices of wit that are kept open for all the low word-mongers of the age? where the mercenary author of a most wretched pamphlet is treated as a man of learning; where even he, who has dishonour'd himself in society by the bad use of his talents, is handsomely treated; where, in fine, every one is received under the title of a wit, who is ridiculous enough to pretend to it? Should I speak the truth after this, and say, that the most despicable writers, who frequent these schools of bad taste and jargon, are less despicable than the dainty sheeps-heads who preside over them?

This however is the world : I do not say, these are the people with whom I have conversed the most since my return ; but these are they who throw themselves into all places where people of better taste frequent. Here nothing is talked of but play and trifles : there the whole conversation turns upon eating and cookery. Men converse together of dress and ornaments ; women, of NEWTON, and the primitive colours : in short, you hear every thing talked of here, but reason and common sense. If in England I have sometimes been surprized at the perplexed air of the women at the play-house, how much more am I so at the air of effrontery, which is but too natural in some of our French women, and which others are not afraid to affect ? It is not uncommon at the opera in London, to see ladies cover their faces with their fans during the whole performance : it is still more common in that of Paris, to see those who do not even shew a decent respect to the publick. We so easily grow familiar with what is ridiculous, that it now seems to us nothing extraordinary to see them carry their work-bags in publick walks, and sit knotting at a play : since the mode is become general, we do not attempt to suspect that there is the least indecency in it. On one side, 'tis true, there are advantages in beholding them thus busy : the air of inattention which this employment gives in the first boxes, we are apt to take for an indication of the superiority of sense in those who

who follow it: those of the second rank only have occasion to listen to a play, in order to understand it. Since it is a privilege of birth to know every thing, without learning any thing; it would be derogating from them to suppose they cannot understand without hearing. Be that as it will, the women of a certain rank, being used to quit any fashion when it is taken up by those of the middle class, ought now to renounce this; since in knotting in publick, the least citizens daughters discover as much grace and dexterity as the women of quality.

Enough of what is ridiculous, which, if it scandalizes some rigid, reserved minds, is however the soul of society. It is indeed so well received in this polite age, that those who have none of it are people to be avoided. In order to be agreeable, we must all reciprocally pay a tribute to the malignity of one another. But, let vice itself be laugh'd at, and stalk abroad without disguise; let the ladies appear in the boxes only to inform the publick of their intrigues; let them affect openness as much as elsewhere they endeavour to be mysterious; let it be fashionable not to be scandaliz'd at all this; nothing more can be infer'd from it, than that there is a great depravation of manners. These general complaints, we are told, signify nothing; human nature has been at all times the same. Thus it is, that every one attempts to justify himself under the pretence of vindicating his age; as if licentious-

ness, in a greater or lesser degree, did not render mankind more or less depraved. It is very true that their inclination to vice has been always the same. But whenever they have got rid of the shame attach'd to it, whenever, under pretence of throwing off the yoke of prejudice, they have broken the reins of decency and publick seemliness, the corruption has been more general and more strong. And in what age has a becoming behaviour been less regarded among all ranks of people? Am I in company? I see nothing every where but stupidity, affectation, and levity. I see that every man is little set by, who is not informed of what is current in Paris; that is, of all the trifles which occupy the frivolous and idle minds of this great city, with which a man of good sense disdains to amuse himself. I find, that during my absence, a jargon has been established, of which, to begin by the name that is given it, I understand nothing. What I mean, is, that which they call *Persiflage**. By all that I can gather from such conversations, people who think themselves sensible, get together in the most serious manner in the world, talk for an hour without saying any thing, and avoid most scrupulously to let the least grain of reason drop in their discourse. And indeed, most of those who speak this jargon, find no great difficulty in what they undertake.

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* I do not pretend to translate a word, which the author professes not to understand in the original.

There is also introduced into society another sort of *Persiflage*, equally extravagant, but much more dangerous. That in which our gay young people pique themselves upon excelling, is nothing but the language of malignity. The little wits, in all ages, have endeavoured to usurp, by abusing the small advantage they perceive themselves to have over those that are below them. It is their weakness to think they advance themselves by abusing of others. In the present age, wherein even the vices have been refined upon, this is not all. A man cannot gain reputation in their way, that is, he cannot make himself esteem'd by one kind of fools, and fear'd by another, but in proportion as he has the art of joking upon another without being perceived. This is indeed the end proposed by those who excel in this way, when they appoint splendid suppers among themselves. One person shall be invited, who thinks it is on account of his merit, when he would not have been admitted, except to be the object of laughter. They do not even accept of entertainments from those whom they think they have a right to treat as *Species*, or images, with any other view than to have the pleasure of *persifling* * them. A pernicious talent, which is used by most people, only because they have not sense enough to avoid it, and of which others are vain for no other reason, but

* This seems to be something like what our English wits call *taking a man off*, or *running the rig upon him*.

but because they are insensible of the injury it does them! a talent, which cannot, in short, be envied, but by those who are not able to reduce it to its just value! Nothing is wanting in order to acquire it, but that proportion of understanding which is sufficient to make a man bad, that is to say, the proportion of which nature is the most prodigal. Malignity is below the man who has much wit, and above him that has none; it just suits only those men, who have that mediocrity of genius, which we most frequently see. When this genius is turned to *Perseflage*, the habit is not difficult to contract, and the occasions of exercising it are always at hand. Few men are such fools, but they may meet with others that are more so than themselves, and those are the dupes pitch'd upon. But the weakness of one man does not prove the strength of another; and yet how many have the cowardice to hold out an offensive arm against those who either cannot, or dare not employ the same in their defence? Some suffer themselves to be imposed on by names or titles, and others respect dignity in those persons who are the least worthy of it.

Without being afraid of those people who think themselves so redoubtable, the most wise part is, not to enter the lists with them. They cannot obtain a victory but over those who dispute with them, and the man of good sense will not debase himself to that degree. He will not engage in combats where the triumph

triumph is often more mortifying than the defeat. Careful not to displease himself, he disdains to speak a jargon which can only degrade him. If he sees a company of people, whom he takes to be reasonable, transform themselves at once into a set of rope-dancers and jack-puddings, he will not chuse to perform any part but that of a spectator. He would even rather be the subject than one of the actors of these indecent comedies, in which honour and reason are equally set at nought. The insolent discourse of those who are so senseless to triumph over his silence, will only excite his contempt.

When I have the misfortune to be a witness of some scenes of this kind, I cannot avoid perceiving, that our French politeness is not so perfect as we imagine it. When even those, whose birth ought to render them more circumspect, use neither restraint nor decency in their conversation, I regret the taciturnity of my good northern English. How much is silence preferable, I will not say to indecency only, but even to that continual abuse of speech so common among us!

As it is the part of a man to be deceived, and of an honest man to acknowledge his error, I confess sincerely, that I am afraid I did not enough know the merit of the English, whilst I lived among them. I may have been disgusted at what was only the opposite of our faults, and what appeared to me unbecoming, was perhaps only not according to our customs.

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In this point I will not decide between the two nations. On either part I see such a mixture of defects and great qualities; of virtues and vices; of prepossessions and real advantages; that if I should have the temerity to form a judgment, I cannot tell to whom the preference is due. There is but one way not to be deceived, and that is, to give it to the most reasonable. By such a decision one may be sure not to disoblige either party, because the prejudices on both sides will be the interpreters.

I have the honour to be,

Sir, your most humble servant, &c.

F I N I S.



ERRATA.

PAGE 15. l. 10. *for* Quietis, *read* Quieti; p. 32. l. 11. *dele* latter; p. 139. l. 4. *add* of; p. 169. l. 5. *for* master, *r.* matter; p. 184. l. 6. *dele* we; p. 202. l. 8. *for* in, *r.* of; p. 203. l. 14. *dele* to; p. 238. *dele* of; p. 244. l. ult. *for* Selina's, *r.* Axalla's; p. 247. l. 20. *r.* your; p. 300. l. 28. *add* as; p. 305. l. 13. *for* Post, *r.* Port; p. 306. l. 11. *for* rites, *r.* riches; l. 16. *for* risque, *r.* pique; p. 341. *for* purge, *r.* urge; p. 345. l. 6. *add* the; p. 347. l. 8. *dele* were; p. 393. l. 28. *for* excited, *r.* excite; p. 395. l. 11. *for* did, *r.* do.

